

THE INSCRUTABLE MYSTERY.

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THE INSCRUTABLE MYSTERY.

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A new star appeared suddenly in the society of the aristocratic old city of HARRISBURGH. Under no chaperonage, save that of her own royal beauty; introduced by no puissant leader of fashion; surrounded by no prestige of high birth or ancient family, —Augustine Fales entered at once on her rôle as queen of society.

Nothing whatever was known of her pre-

cedents; there were no old servants about her to furnish a single link in the mythical chain of her past history. Those who sought her company knew only that she was beautiful, and in looking on her face forgot that it is customary to ask for reference before accepting strangers as friends.

Perhaps the very mystery that hung about Miss Fales helped her popularity and

gained her admirers. There is a secret something in the composition of almost every person that reaches after the mysterious, and delights in the inexplicable.

She dressed as a duchess might—everything around her was drenched in elegance. Her silks and jewels were the costliest in the city; her horses were superb; the house she had taken and furnished was almost palatial in its style and appointments.

She had been but four weeks in Harrisburgh, and already she counted her admirers by the score. All other belles were deserted, for men to pay their homage to this newly risen luminary. The admiration which might have turned the head of an ordinary woman had no effect on Miss Fales. She moved through it all coldly and proudly, accepting homage as her right, showing no partiality, favoring no one above others.

Her most devoted admirer was Philip Howard, a young South Carolinian—handsome, passionate, and hot-blooded, like his native South. He was impatient beneath her coldness, but still pertinacious in his attentions, esteeming himself the happiest of men if permitted to hold her fan or touch her white fingers in attending her to her carriage. He was jealous of all new aspirants to her favor, and moody and miserable if she smiled on any save himself.

Augustine regarded him as a very useful appendage to her train—if she thought of him at all when he was not present—and wondered what people allowed themselves to fall in love for. She had yet to meet the master spirit of her destiny.

The mayor of Harrisburgh gave a grand ball on Thanksgiving Eve, and all the youth and beauty and fashion of the place were present. Miss Fales was the acknowledged queen. Her purple velvet robe became her royally. That beautiful but trying hue, which so few women would have dared to wear, enhanced the exquisite fairness of her complexion and deepened the scintillant lustre of her great dark eyes. Her black hair was looped up with diamond sprays; her cheeks, usually pale, flushed like the heart of a damask rose; and her red lips opened only to let fall some flash of wit or sentiment that bewildered all listeners. The unsurpassed surpassed herself.

As she stood under the full blaze of the great chandelier in the centre of the reception-room, conversing with a knot of gentlemen, and idly stirring the air with her

Turkish fan, it was no wonder that King Dorchester, with all his cold impassiveness, should pause in his advance to the hostess for a second glance at Miss Fales.

A slight, almost imperceptible tinge of color swept up to his white forehead as his eye met hers; a vague, nameless, inexplicable thrill shot over him as he touched her garments in passing. He did not glance at her again, but made his courtly greeting to the fair mayoress, wondering all the time what that dark-haired woman was to him, that she should stir a single emotion in the heart he had thought forever sealed to the influence of her sex.

A little later, and the pressure of the crowd brought Fred Malibran to Mr. Dorchester's side. They had been classmates at college; now, in later years, they were friends. Almost before Dorchester realized what was going on, he found himself before Miss Fales, heard his own name and hers pronounced, and was acknowledging the introduction with his accustomed haughty grace.

She took his arm for a promenade. Neither danced. Mr. Dorchester considered such frivolous amusements beneath him; Miss Fales, from some unexplained reason of her own, never joined the dancers.

The evening passed in a sort of mystic whirl to King Dorchester. It was more like the gorgeous fantasy of dreamland, than the cold reality of a fashionable ball-room.

That night, long after he had retired to rest, sleep kept aloof, and the vision of Augustine Fales's glorious eyes shut out every thought of slumber. He recalled the nameless charm of her manner, the indescribably sweet intonation of her voice, and then anathematized his folly for thinking twice of such an inconsiderable thing as a woman's beauty.

Two days afterward he met her again at the house of a mutual friend, and there he asked and obtained permission to call on her. The acquaintance thus commenced ripened into a sort of negative intimacy. He went often into her society; she asked him to come; but when together both were fitful, uncertain, and at times positively uncivil.

All his life long Dorchester had been noted for his haughty pride. It ran in the blood of the Dorchesters to be arrogant and unbending. Nothing had ever crushed to

humility the stately hauteur that had always distinguished him; dispensations that might have softened and humbled other men only made him stronger and prouder.

In his young manhood he had been engaged to a beautiful girl with whom he had, as it were, grown up, and the time had been fixed for their marriage. The girl was unstable, and a newer suitor enticed her from her allegiance to Mr. Dorchester. It was a brief infatuation, however; she soon repented, and, full of love and gentleness, begged to be received back into the old place.

King Dorchester cast the suppliant from him with contempt. The woman who, having once felt his kisses on her lips, could turn to the caresses of another, was sunken too low to merit his fullest scorn.

Two years afterward Isabel Forsyth died—people said of a broken heart—and Dorchester saw her coffin borne past his office, and turned from the careless contemplation to the technicalities of a case of petty larceny. She was nothing to him when living, still less when dead.

His enemies called him selfish. Perhaps he was. Certain it is that he would have scorned the friendship of one whose love he had asked. He must be all, or nothing. With him there was no medium. Such a nature, when once fully yielded up to passion, is like the breaking into a storm of the great deep. It sweeps all before it, and will listen to no cold reasoning or prudential considerations.

He fought long against it—this King Dorchester—it was hard for him to own himself conquered, but he came to it at last. Failing to secure her love, he must go hard and reckless through life. The consciousness came over him slowly, settling down with iron sternness upon his mind. Once acknowledging to himself the mighty passion that possessed him, he grew impatient to pour it out to her who had inspired it. But she, with a fine intuition, perhaps, of what was coming, carefully avoided giving him an opportunity of speaking. If for one moment she suffered herself to warm to cordiality in his presence, the next she grew cold as ice. She seemed filled with a steady dread of hearing the confession she knew he was so anxious to make—she would have ignored his acquaintance, but he would not be repelled. A spirit like his laughs at the common things that feebler minds call ob-

stacles. He forced her to a private interview at last.

There was a party—the room was warm—she spoke of the heat. He put a shawl around her, and drew her out into the garden before she was aware of his intention. They stood alone beneath the solemn stars and the young crescent moon sitting away up there so calmly in the purple midnight sky. She looked up to the heavens above her, and shivered.

"It chills me," she said; "it is so vast that my soul fails to take its ample glory in!"

He burst forth, passionately:

"Yes, it is deep and fathomless and infinite—so is the passion that burns in my heart! Augustine Fales, you have roused the spirit that I had thought forever secure from the touch of woman, and only you can quell the tumult. I love you with the whole strength of my manhood. All the pent-up emotions of years are stirred in your presence. Give me an adequate return!"

She broke away from him with a sort of vague terror. Her face grew white as death, her eyes were fixed and glassy with extreme agony, and she shook like an aspen.

"Let me go; your words kill me!" she said, in a choked voice.

He put his arm around her, and held her in a grasp of iron.

"No, you shall not go! You shall not take a single step away from me till you have plighted yourself to me, now and forever. I claim your love as my right. No man should give as I have given without receiving a full recompense. You love me, and you shall tell me so!"

She heard him not in anger, though she was as proud as himself, but in intensest anguish. It was written on every line of her countenance.

"Don't! don't! be merciful, Mr. Dorchester! You do not know what terrible fate you are tempting!"

"Augustine, understand me fully. I love you, and your love I will have! No childish thing shall cast us apart. In the sight of Heaven we are one, deny it if you dare! You love me! Be true to yourself, and acknowledge it!"

He almost crushed the unresisting hands he held in one of his, but she did not look up—her head had fallen on her bosom, her eyes sprang from meeting the fire in his. He raised up her face relentlessly to his

gaze. He read there the confirmation of his charge—he knew he had not spoken falsely: yet who, save he, would have risked thus speaking?

A blood-red crimson swept over cheek and brow—she would have sunk to the ground in very shame, but he held her up. An instant he stood there in passionate triumph, noting every change of the troubled face before him, then his arms closed around her, and his lips met hers.

“Augustine—forgive me everything, my darling! I was cruel and audacious—I will be tender and gentle henceforth—your love shall be my fetters—I am your slave.”

She sprang from his embrace, and regained the house before he could overtake her. When he re-entered the drawing-room, it was to meet the profuse regrets of the company that Miss Fales had become suddenly indisposed, and been obliged to return home.

Though surprised at the apparent contradiction between her looks and her conduct, Dorchester was filled with satisfaction. He knew she loved him, and what more could he ask? Her lips had not uttered it to him, but the unmistakable language of the soul had spoken it. The trembling lips he had kissed were not unwilling—for one little moment she had clung to him wildly, passionately, and then torn herself away as if his very touch were a crime.

It was many days before he saw her again, and then she was so pale, so haggard, and worn, that he had great difficulty in restraining himself before the curious lookers-on. When evening came, he called at her house. She was not in, the servant said, but Dorchester thought otherwise, and pushing past the astonished servant, he entered without ceremony. He reached the sitting-room just in time to see the drapery of her he sought disappearing through the opening into her private boudoir. He would not turn back, but followed her, and closed the door behind him.

She faced him with an angry frown on her brow and bitter words on her lips, but his first speech was humble enough to win her forgiveness, because she heard him.

“Pardon me, I am transgressing all laws of courtesy, I know, but you avoid me so persistently, that there is no way for me but to be a brute. And I would suffer untold agonies but to purchase you one little thrill of joy. Have I forfeited all right to

your favor? Am I never to know the bliss of hearing you say I am beloved? Only give me the spoken assurance—”

“You know not what you ask!” she said, vehemently. “Great Heaven! did you know—could you see as I see, you would sooner smite yourself dead than seek the curse of my love!”

“Augustine, I will have no trifling. I love you, and you love me. Deny it, if you dare to stain your soul with a falsehood!”

Her alternately white and crimson face spoke eloquently. He understood it.

“Your looks answer me. Now, then, what shall divide us? There is nothing in the broad earth powerful enough to separate two whose souls the immortal touch of love has made one. Even death itself is powerless.”

“Do not tempt me!” she exclaimed, in a tone of entreaty. “I must not—I dare not listen to you! I must never see you again, if I would do what is right. Leave me now, and never seek to see my face more. Otherwise I must quit this place, and go to some spot where you cannot find me—where no breath nor thought nor thrill telling of you can ever reach me!”

He placed his back against the door, as though he feared her instant exodus.

“I shall not leave this room till your word is passed to become mine. I am fully aware that by remaining here in your private apartment I am placing you in an equivocal position, but there is no remedy for it. And I swear to you that I will stay here—though the whole world be looking on in scorn and wonder—till I have your promise!”

Even as he spoke the light murmur of female voices at the hall door floated up to them. Augustine started forward, pale with apprehension.

“O King! it is Mrs. Greyson—my rival and my enemy. It would be my ruin if she saw me here. Oh, if you love me, save me!”

He took the clasped hands she lifted to him and pressed them to his bosom.

“My darling, I ask a simple thing—only your simple ‘Yes.’”

“Sir, this is unfair and ungentlemanly. No true man would take this cruel advantage of circumstances.”

“Augustine, were I not satisfied of your love, I would scorn to influence you by a feather’s weight; but something holds you

back from the sweet confession I thirst to hear."

"King Dorchester, you would hate and despise me if I should lead you on to the fatal step you are insane enough to take."

"Never! Hear me when I solemnly declare that whatever there may be dark about your history, I care not. You love me, and I will dare any fate, knowing that inestimable truth. Come ruin, death, and desolation—I accept it all, willingly, so that I may call you mine! Hark! they are coming. Will you be my wife?"

He took her in his arms, his dark, impassioned eyes on her face, his head bent down so that her lightest whisper reached his ear.

"Yes, anything. O King! it will be your shipwreck—but remember you would have it so."

He kissed her, put her in a chair, and left the apartment by one door, just as Mrs. Greyson was lifting the latch of the other.

Mr. Dorchester's courtship seemed destined to be a stormy one. Every succeeding interview with his betrothed was fraught with fitful passion. Sometimes she flew to his arms with a sort of nervous gladness, at others she was cold and unimpressible as a marble statue.

Proud, and absorbed in the beautiful woman he had won, King Dorchester revelled in a new and glorious existence. If Augustine was an enigma, she loved him alone; and though she chose to be penurious of her caresses, he rejoiced in the royal right of possession—a man's most highly esteemed prerogative.

He was too lofty-spirited to question her—to seek to penetrate whatever she was not ready to offer him voluntarily, and so they lived on with the shadow of some black secret between them.

Once, indeed, he had demanded the cause of her inexplicable fitfulness, but she had grown so pale and agitated that he had changed the subject, and mentally made a vow never to speak to her again of the matter. He was happy in her love—he would let that suffice him.

Their marriage was to take place in January, early in the month, and on Christmas day their engagement was made public.

A few days afterward, Mr. Howard's servant brought a note to Mr. Dorchester. It was laconic enough, and read thus:

"MR. DORCHESTER:—You have supplanted me where the dearest feelings of my heart were concerned. I ask of you the satisfaction one gentleman has a right to demand of another. Select your own time, place and weapons.

"Yours, &c., PHILIP HOWARD."

Dorchester's haughty lip curled scornfully as he read the suggestive epistle. He took up his pen and wrote,

"MR. HOWARD,—I am a Northerner, and am not accustomed to answer with my blood for my success over any man. I will not fight you! KING DORCHESTER."

Two hours afterward, Howard called on his rival at his hotel, but Dorchester was out. They met accidentally the same day in a retired park, through which ran a foot-path shortening the distance to the lodgings of the Southerner.

Dorchester would have passed the other with a haughty bow, but Howard planted himself before him. His face was pale with intense excitement, his lip was compressed and stern; he looked like a man who had made up his mind to grapple destiny to the death.

"King Dorchester!" he hissed from between his closed teeth, "you are a coward!"

Dorchester's eye flamed, but his self-control was inimitable. He was impassive as a rock.

"The opinion of a would-be murderer is not to be credited," he said, coldly.

"Villain! you have wrecked my happiness! She would have been mine if you had not come between us. Nothing but blood can atone! There, take that, and defend yourself!"

He threw him a pistol, the mate to the one he was bringing to a level. Dorchester cast it contemptuously to the ground.

"Then die!" cried Howard in a voice of concentrated rage, and simultaneously with the discharge of his weapon, Augustine Fales threw herself between her betrothed and the deadly charge. She received the whole contents of the pistol in her shoulder, and sank to the ground without a sigh, covered with her own blood.

"Great God! I have killed her," cried Howard in despairing agony—"I have killed the woman I would have died a thousand deaths to save! But we will go together!" and before Dorchester could lift a

finger to prevent him, the reckless man had seized on the second weapon and lay on the ground breathing his last, the name of Augustine on his lips.

The marriage was postponed a month, and for three weeks Augustine lay on a bed of sickness, from which she arose one day, to go the next to the altar. Dorchester was impatient at the delay. He would wait no longer—and that wild, sobbing, winter day, they were made one.

The night was a fearful one. The wind wailed through the gaunt trees like a Banshee, and the unseasonable lightning, white as ghostly moonlight, broke through the heavy clouds at intervals until morning. If one believed in omens, then the bridal day of King Dorchester was most unpropitiating.

The health of the bride precluded the idea of the customary bridal tour, and amid the loud lamentations of society Mr. Dorchester took his wife to his Northern home.

This home was all that Augustine could have asked. The wild, romantic grandeur of its situation on the rock-bound seashore of New England, pleased her sombre fancy, and the interior was fitted up with lavish gorgeousness. Nothing that money could purchase or art devise was wanting. The house itself was of ancient construction, abounding in unexpected apartments, and secluded alcoves, rich in food for a vivid imagination, which might have peopled all those unused chambers with beings of another world.

The wing set apart for the use of Mrs. Dorchester had been modernized and renovated; the high, narrow windows were replaced by those of more cheerful appearance, and the oaken-panelled walls were hidden in tapestry of gold and crimson. Her *boudoir* looked out on the wide expanse of the ocean, studded here and there with the white sails of ships and burnished with silvery light when touched by the mellow sunshine.

Life to the dwellers there was a foretaste of paradise. Sometimes, in the course of this troubled existence, we are permitted to take from the bitterness of reality some little moments that even Heaven itself can hardly rival in the intensity of bliss—moments, to which, in the after coming years of dreary gloom and dull endurance, we look back with silent awe and wonder.

Sitting beside Augustine in the sheltered

room that stormy March evening, King Dorchester could hardly realize that he walked in the same world that claimed him a year ago. Then he had been harsh and cold and sordid—today, he had a kindly disposition toward every living thing. He would not have harmed the cunning spider that was building his mazy net across the sculptured face of his favorite Apollo.

The storm roared without; he could hear the sullen beat of the great waves on the rocky crest; but what cared he for the gloom without? There was light within. He drew his wife closer within the shelter of his arms, smoothing back the soft hair to look into the eyes lifted so tenderly to his face.

A servant entered with a letter. Mr. Dorchester reached forth his hand to take it, but Augustine sprang forward, pale and breathless, and snatching it from the salver, hid it in the folds of her dress. Mr. Dorchester looked surprised.

"Excuse me," he said; "I have no wish to pry into your correspondence."

She rose, looked at him a moment with unutterable sadness, pressed her lips to his brow tenderly, almost pityingly, and retired to an inner chamber. Her letter was brief—there was only a mere line—but its effect upon Mrs. Dorchester was fearful. The veins in her forehead swelled into knotted cords; she clenched her hands tightly together, and a smothered groan burst from her lips.

By a strong effort she controlled herself, sat down and wrote a few words, enclosing a bank bill of large amount; then enveloping herself in a dark hood and shawl, she stole down the back stairway and out into the night. It was full a mile to the post-office, through a lonely stretch of moor, scantily wooded; but if at any other time she might have felt fear, she knew nothing of it now. Her note deposited in the letter-box, she returned swiftly and silently as she had come; and when her husband sought their chamber, he found her apparently sleeping.

After this, an almost imperceptible shadow fell between them. Not even their most intimate friends would have noticed it, but they themselves felt its spectral presence. Augustine grew daily more pallid, and the dark circles round her eyes told of silent suffering. She moaned in her sleep—when, indeed, she did sleep—and awoke

always with a nervous start, bathed in cold perspiration.

Her letters came regularly now, and on Thursdays she invariably drove to the office herself. Once, at night, she had gone on foot and alone, during the absence of her husband in a neighboring city, and he, returning sooner than had been anticipated, found her absent. Learning that she had gone out alone, he followed her, met her just in the outskirts of the village, and took her home.

No word passed between them during their walk, but when he left her at the door of her room, he said,

"Augustine, do not let this occur again. Remember, I am no jealous Blue Beard, but my honor must be preserved. It will become the wife of King Dorchester to be seen walking the streets at night, unattended."

The white anguish of her face touched him, and made him tender with her. He drew her to his side, and let her face rest against his. When she lifted it up, she was calm, and her voice was sweet and steady.

"My husband," she said, solemnly, "remember that I warned you, but you would have it so. And whatever may seem strange to you in my conduct, remember also that I love none other, and that I am bound by what is stronger than death itself to suffer on alone!"

"I trust you, Augustine, only be mindful that others may not judge you as charitably as I do—and have a care."

The ensuing day he went to the city on business. He was an eminent lawyer—if we have not before mentioned his profession—and did not expect to return home until the end of the week. When he did come, he missed his wife's fond greeting, and learned that she had left home the very afternoon of the day of his departure.

He went up to his room, and found there a note in her handwriting. Tearing it open, he read:

"Do not be alarmed. I am called unexpectedly away. Satisfy all inquiry as best you can. "YOUR AUGUSTINE."

The next morning, when Mr. Dorchester awoke, his wife was slumbering by his side. He raised himself up and looked at her. All the indignation he secretly felt at her behaviour melted into pity at sight of the wan, sunken face on the pillow. He gath-

ered her into his arms and soothed her as only he could, trusting still in her truth and purity. And afterward, no allusion whatever was made by either to this unexplained absence.

A week after, Mr. Dorchester came suddenly upon his wife in the garden. She did not see him—she was so deeply engaged with a man who stood before her, that she failed to hear his footstep. A crimson tinge heated Dorchester's face as the stranger took her hand and pressed it to his lips.

They were conversing in a low tone; he caught only at the sound of words.

Mrs. Dorchester's companion was in his very first youth. He could not have passed his nineteenth year—tall, handsome, and singularly attractive in his manner.

A jealous pang shot through the heart of the husband; for the first time he doubted his wife. Hitherto his love had made him blind. Now his eyes were opened. He looked on in a sort of savage wonder.

The young man bent over Augustine with a sort of reverential defiance, kissed again the hand he held, and disappeared in the shrubbery.

Dorchester's heel ground deep into the earth; he crushed back the cry of rage that rose for utterance, and strode into the house. His wife found him there when she entered, his eyes dark with gloom, his whole manner fierce and repellant. She put her hand in his. He flung it off with a gesture of loathing, and escaping into the library, locked the door between them.

She sank down on the floor, lifting her clasped hands heavenward, and crying,

"It has come to this at last! God be merciful!"

Connected with Mrs. Dorchester's apartments, and situated in the same wing with them, was a suite of rooms long unused, some for the storage of useless rubbish, and which no one entered from one year's end to another. A lonely corridor led from Augustine's dressing-room to these deserted apartments, the door of which she kept locked, and the key in her possession.

Returning home one night, quite late, Mr. Dorchester had observed the unusual spectacle of a light gleaming from a remote window of one of these untenanted rooms, gleaming for a single instant and then disappearing. He went at once to his wife's chamber for a solution of the mystery. Au-

gustine was still up, and he noticed that the door leading to the before mentioned corridor was resting on the latch, as if hastily closed.

"Mrs. Dorchester," he said—he never called her Augustine now—"who uses the south rooms in this wing?"

She clutched the table by which she was standing, for support, and her voice shook as she replied,

"They are closed, I have been always told."

"So I thought. But tonight I saw a light there in the corner apartment, and as I am not credulous enough to believe in the agency of spirits, I am suspicious of the flesh. Besides, if I were naturally superstitious, none of my ancestors were murderers—"

"Murderers! Good God!"

She was absolutely deathly as the words gushed forth.

"I said murderers, madam. What is there so terrible in the word to you?"

She sunk down in a seat and covered her face with her hands, while her slight form shook with some strong, uncontrollable emotion.

Dorchester was at a loss what to imagine. Love, anger, pity, curiosity, pride, all strove for the mastery.

"If I have pained you, I beg your pardon; but this mystery must be fathomed. I will visit these rooms and see for myself."

He pushed open the door and stepped into the corridor. She flew past him, seizing his hands in wild entreaty.

"O King! O my husband! I beg, I implore of you to desist! See! I will go down on my knees to you, and entreat you for mercy! If ever you did love me, by the memory of that love! by the memory of those days when heaven was let down to earth for us to dwell therein—O King! King! hear me! I pray you, in mercy hear me! You promised to risk and dare everything for my love!"

"Your love! Yes, but then I did not think it a thing to be so lightly bought and sold as I have found it! I did not think it was to be transferred to another before our honeymoon was old."

"Hush! Anything but that! I can bear all your reproaches patiently, save that!"

"You act your part well, madam. I give you credit for it. But it does not shock your ears to listen to a paramour's talk, at

night, in a lonely garden, like any common prostitute—"

"King Dorchester! Beware how you try me too far! Had any other man than you applied that word to me, it should have been his last! I would have killed him, if it had cursed my soul! But from you—you—O Heaven! O Heaven!"

He took a step to pass her. She flew to the door at the further end of the corridor. It was fastened by a bolt falling over a huge iron staple, and secured by a padlock. This was not there. She thrust her white arm through the socket, and confronted her husband.

"Let me pass," he said, sternly.

"Never!" she cried. "I will hold my post till I die." Her slight figure dilated, her cheeks burnt with vivid crimson, her eyes blazed like stars.

He gazed at her with involuntary admiration. There was something in his proud nature that sympathized with the bold courage of this woman who defied him.

"There is nothing here that concerns you," she went on; "it is my secret, and once you promised me never to seek to penetrate it. Does King Dorchester intend to break his word? Truly I have been deceived, for I thought him an honorable man!"

She hissed the words with a contemptuous scorn that cut him to the quick. He drew back instantly.

"You are right. I did promise. I repeat the vow. Whatever these rooms may contain, it is safe from my curiosity. You can take off the locks if you wish, and open the doors. I will not even look that way."

She caught the hand at his side and laid her face upon it.

"O my husband!" she exclaimed, in a choked voice, "you are cruelly tried, but ever true and generous! May God in heaven bless you!"

He made no reply, but hurried away from her, and out of the house, where on the star-lit terrace he paced half the far-spent night away.

After that, strange stories obtained credence with the servants of The Ery. Phantom figures were seen on the balconies of the south wing at night; dim lights gleamed from the windows, disappearing in deep blackness; and sometimes, at long intervals, groans, too dismal and weird to come from beings of earth, disturbed the deathly

stillness that otherwise reigned over the place.

Augustine was secluded in her own apartments for the greater part of the time. She mingled none with society, and received no visitors. She grew thin and haggard, and her husband, his stern soul filled with conflicting emotions of love and jealousy, saw her fading away from him day by day.

There was little intercourse between them now. Both were wretched, but both were too proud to give vent to their misery in the manner of other sufferers. So they lived on.

The spring passed, summer opened in beauty and closed in tears, and autumn drew on.

One ominous night in October, Mr. Dorchester saw in his wife's room the same young man he had once discovered with her in the garden, but he was so pale and changed that he hardly recognized him at first.

They were speaking together in agitated whispers. Augustine's face was blanched with terror of some kind, and the youth seemed entreating her to something with his whole powers of persuasion.

Their interview did not last above three minutes, and when her visitor left her he heard him say,

"In God above lies our help! If he will only be merciful!"

And Augustine had replied:

"I trust him! Regnault, terrible as is the alternative, I would choose it before—exposure. Death is beautiful, sometimes—"

Whatever else she said was inaudible to the listener, as the two descended the back stairs and were lost in the gloom.

From that time Augustine grew even more ghost-like than before. She was nervous, irritable, and terrified at the slightest sound. Her cheeks burned with a feverish heat, her flesh was hot, and her pulse high and rapid.

Mr. Dorchester insisted upon calling a physician, but she persisted in declaring herself perfectly well. All she needed was rest and seclusion. That she had. For three days her rooms were locked—she did not come down to her meals, but had them in her *boudoir*; and if she slept, it did her little good, if one might judge from the frightful pallor of her countenance.

About ten o'clock one drizzly night, there was an imperative summons at the hall door of The Ery. The servant who an-

swered it found four men, in the uniform of police officers, and the county sheriff, waiting in the rain. The latter asked for Mr. Dorchester, but he was absent from home, though momentarily expected to return.

Mrs. Dorchester, then; he would see her, the sheriff said.

The servant who rapped at her door waited long for a reply, but at length she appeared, wan and ghastly as air, and rendered still more so by the deep mourning habiliments in which she was arrayed. The servant regarded her with mute surprise, and forgot to deliver his errand until she reminded him of it.

"Some gentlemen at the door are desiring to see Mrs. Dorchester."

"Who are they, Peter?"

"Police officers—four of them—I should think, and—" the man hesitated—"and Mr. Warrenne, the sheriff, ma'am."

"Very well," she said, quietly, "show them up. I expected them."

"Up here, ma'am?" asked Peter, in amazement.

"Yes, this is the place for them; show them up."

They ascended the great staircase slowly, closely followed by Mr. Dorchester, who had just arrived. Mrs. Dorchester met them at the door of her *boudoir*, and motioned them in.

"I am very sorry," began the sheriff to Mr. Dorchester, "to be obliged to ask permission to search your house. I assure you that it is a very disagreeable mission, but the complaint has reached the authorities that a notorious criminal who has long eluded justice is concealed here; and we have a warrant for the apprehension of that person. Your permission, of course—"

"I give you permission, gentlemen," said Augustine, calmly. "Nay, I will aid you in your investigation. Follow me."

She passed out into the corridor leading to the south wing, followed by the whole party.

She went through the first room at the extremity of the passage, and flinging open the door of the second chamber, stepped aside.

"There, gentlemen," she said, pointing inward, "there is your prisoner."

They all started back with one accord, their faces pale, their eyes fixed wildly on what that opened door revealed.

The room was bare of furniture, but in the centre stood a massive mahogany bedstead, black with age; and stretched upon that bed was the stark figure of a woman in the majestic slumber of death, her cold, ghastly face silvered by the rays of the rising moon that swept in at the window.

"Marguerite St. Semmes lies before you," said the cold, steady voice. "You are at liberty to serve your warrant."

The men remained rooted to the spot. Dorchester, only, advanced to the bed's foot, and gazed reverently at the face of the corpse, his breast torn with a variety of conflicting emotions. To him, the scene was an enigma; his wife held the solution.

Silence reigned in the room; broken, at length, by Mrs. Dorchester.

"I call you all to witness me when I declare, on my truth and honor, that King Dorchester had no hand in this. From first to last, I, alone, have incurred the guilt of concealing the woman who now lies dead before us. For five months, I have fed her, and mine has been the only face upon which her weary eyes have rested. Even the gratification of holding the hand of her idolized son, in her dying moments, was denied her. You have hunted her for seven years—an unjustly accused, innocent woman. But death has been kind and taken her away to a place where no human laws can affect her more. All fear and all suffering are over for Marguerite St. Semmes."

At the sound of that name, as before, Dorchester's countenance underwent a rapid change. He pressed forward to the side of his wife.

"Augustine, what relation did that dead woman bear to you?"

"She was my sister—my dear and only sister! She watched over my helpless infancy with more than a mother's devotion; she brought up my wayward life to years of womanhood, and then the curse fell upon her. My mother died in my infancy, commending me to the care of this sister, then eighteen years of age. Nobly did she fulfil her trust. Marguerite! O Marguerite! in heaven, the angels will be tender of you for all the tenderness you threw about my blessed childhood!"

She bowed her face to that of the dead, and wept the first tears her eyes had known for months. Dorchester's arm around her waist, drawing her away, recalled her to continue her explanation.

"Twenty years ago Marguerite was married to Guy St. Semmes, and for thirteen years life flowed on pleasantly for her—for us all. I dwelt with them in a fair home, in sunny Louisiana. Mr. St. Semmes came to his death by violence. The papers of the day gave all the sickening particulars; and these gentlemen, probably, could recount to you every link in the chain of circumstantial evidence that branded my sinless sister with the crime of murder. She was seized, and cast into prison. She was tried and condemned to the gallows. Our family was the proudest and wealthiest in the State. The fame of its ancestors was untarnished. Their honor was unstained by the record of a single base deed. Could we brook the idea of having one of its members—one whom we knew was guiltless—perish like a felon, in the sight of a gaping crowd of curious gazers? Never! Gold is all powerful, and though it failed to bribe the jurors, it bought the jailor, and my sister escaped from prison the night before the day fixed for her execution. You all, probably, remember the excitement this event caused. You know how so-called justice clamored for its defrauded rights—you know how heavy were the rewards offered for the capture of Marguerite St. Semmes, dead or alive. Everything failed. She outwitted the keenest detectives in the country, and she was saved. This was while my father and brother lived. Two years ago they both died, and then the whole weight of this dread secret fell upon me—upon me and Regnault, my sister's only child. Oh! you can hardly conceive of the miserable shifts we were put to to keep our unhappy relative secure. You can guess little of the untold agony she suffered through those terrible seven years. Their wretchedness killed her, for she had no other disease. Before my marriage, I kept her always with me; but I was obliged to travel from place to place, and under different names, to keep up the deception. I met Mr. Dorchester, and for the first time in my life my heart was touched. I loved him with my whole soul, but I dared not marry him on account of my sister. Her secret was one that I could not confide to any living being; and I had made every preparation to leave Harrisburgh and him I loved, when he forced me into an engagement I had never dreamed of wronging him by perpetrating."

"My poor Augustine!" he was holding

her hands now, and gazing down upon her with unutterable fondness, "if you had only confided all to me, I would have been faithful unto death."

"And men would have called your faithfulness a crime. No, King; I loved you too well to burden you with my secret—my guilty secret, if you will. It was a responsibility I must bear alone. After I married, it was necessary to separate from Marguerite, and a house was secured for her away up in the depths of a New Hampshire wilderness. There she and Regnault dwelt alone until a few weeks ago. Suspicion found her out. I was obliged to bring her here. Worn out, wretched, hunted to death, she never was herself after coming to The Ery. She pined, she said, to rejoin her husband, and the constant thought of him brought her nearer death. Thank God for it! Regnault had information that her last hiding-place was discovered. For three days I have been praying for my sister's death. My petitions are answered. Two hours ago I caught her last sigh, and closed her eyes for that everlasting rest upon which she has entered. There, I have told you all; now do with me as you will. I am ready to receive my punishment at the hands of the law."

Dorchester caught her in his arms, regardless of those around him.

"My noble wife! my darling! may God forgive me for wronging you, even in thought. No power on earth shall take you from me!"

Silently, and with awe-stricken faces, the men withdrew, and at a call from Augustine, Regnault entered. They retired and left him alone with the dead, to pour out his great grief over her who had suffered so much.

Early in the morning a sealed packet was brought to The Ery by an unknown person, directed to Augustine. She glanced her eye over it, uttered a sharp cry, and fell fainting to the floor.

Mr. Dorchester lifted her up in wildest despair, calling upon her by every endearing name to arouse and speak to him once more. Now that he knew her value, he dreaded lest every breeze that swept over her might bring her a pang of sorrow.

His caresses brought her back to life again; she pointed to the paper on the floor, and asked him to read it through. He did so. It was a large sheet, and closely written; but we will give only the facts needed to explain what we have already chronicled.

It was the death-bed confession of Courtney Rayland, an early lover of the unfortunate Marguerite St. Semmes.

They had been children together, and grown to youth still loving neighbors, and on terms of friendly intimacy. Rayland had hoped, eventually, to win the love of Marguerite, whom he adored with a passion bordering on madness. She had preferred Mr. St. Semmes—and defrauded of what he deemed his rights, he had sworn a secret oath of revenge. Years passed before everything was ripe for its accomplishment; but the time came at last, and his hand had given St. Semmes his death-blow.

By the most adroit and cunning management, he had succeeded in fixing the crime upon Marguerite; and having seen her condemned to a felon's death, he left the country.

Since then, he had wandered over many lands, seeking rest, and finding none. The spirit of the murdered man was ever whispering retribution in his ears; and at last, driven by an influence he could not resist, he had returned home.

Careful investigation had revealed to him the fact of Mrs. Dorchester's relationship to Mrs. St. Semmes; and now, in his last moments, he was glad to make whatever reparation lay in his power.

This confession was signed by two respectable witnesses, and sworn to before the town magistrate.

Mr. Dorchester heard a sigh of intense relief when he had finished reading—the last blessing he needed had come.

The confession was made public on the day that Marguerite was committed to the tomb, and Regnault St. Semmes held up his head among men.

And now, Augustine Dorchester, once more fair and blooming and beautiful, queens it in society; but her most imperial throne is the heart of her husband, where, secure from all coldness, she dwells—to him an angel of purity and peace.

THE LADY IN GREEN.

MRS. SARAH P DOUGHTY

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THE LADY IN GREEN.

BY MRS. SARAH P. DOUGHTY.

Rain, rain,—ceaseless ruin. We know and acknowledge that it is very wrong to fret at the weather; but it is certainly most trying to the patience, after leaving home, with all its comforts, to seek health and pleasure at the sea-shore, not to see a gleam of sunshine for five or six, nay, seven days. And so cold! We might have supposed ourselves to be suddenly transported to the frozen regions. After a day or two of shivering, and enveloping ourselves in shawls and mantles, some one sagely remarked that “it was no use to freeze to death because it was in the middle of summer;” which sentiment meeting with unanimous applause, a fire was immediately ordered in the boarders’ parlor, where gentlemen and ladies,

old and young, soon assembled, glad to leave their own chilly apartments.

Rather an unsocial company we were at first. All were strangers, and it seemed probable that all would remain so. There we sat,—some looking out at the window,—ladies with their gloves on, no work, no books, no new arrivals, nothing to vary the dull monotony, excepting, perhaps, the entrance of the waiter, politely announcing to the ladies and gentlemen that breakfast, dinner or tea, whichever it chanced to be, was ready. This, for a time, indeed, dispelled all gloom, for no one could excel our host in his ability to do the honors of his excellent and plentiful table. He possessed the rare talent of not only making his own

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conversation agreeable and entertaining, but of leading others to do the same; so that the very persons who had, perhaps, passed the whole forenoon in the same room without exchanging a syllable, became, under his genial influence, as lively and sociable as school acquaintances, when they meet after a lapse of many years. But on returning to the parlor, the spirit of silence seemed to return also, and all were as mute as ever. What could be the reason?

I took the subject into serious consideration, and finally came to the conclusion that, as "idleness is the mother of all mischief," it must necessarily be the cause of this; and hastily leaving the room, I soon returned with my work-basket.

Several ladies followed my example, and in the course of half an hour the gloves were all laid aside, and the fair hands busily employed in various branches of needle-work, and cheerful conversation had taken the place of the former dull silence. The effects of industry are, indeed, wonderful. The rain was almost forgotten, so intent were we in watching the progress of collars, ruffles, purses, watch-guards, and so forth. One of the gentlemen kindly produced a book on a subject of general interest, and proposed reading aloud, which offer was gladly accepted; and the time passed so rapidly that the summons to tea was unexpected and surprising to all.

About the middle of the forenoon of the fourth day, we were agreeably surprised to hear the sound of a carriage driving up to the door. There had been no arrivals for several days, and some of the most curious amongst us stationed ourselves at the windows to inspect the travelers. The rain poured so fast, however, that we were unable to gratify our curiosity to any great extent. We ascertained that the carriage contained at least one lady, and while we expressed our sympathy for her supposed wet and forlorn condition, we congratulated ourselves on our comfortable room and blazing fire, and felt very hospitably inclined toward the expected guest.

Footsteps were heard upon the stairs; the door was thrown open, and a lady entered. By entering, I mean that she crossed the threshold, but no further. There she stood,—a perfect Amazon in size and mien. Her shawl had fallen from her shoulders, and revealed her ample form, clothed in a bright green figured satin, with

a pink ribbon around her waist, and another around her neck; while ear-rings, breast-pin, and numberless rings, of unrivaled lustre, were so arranged as to be fully visible to the admiring beholder, even when the fair owner was arrayed in walking costume.

There she stood, and, casting a contemptuous glance around our comfortable but somewhat plainly furnished apartment, turned, with an air of derision, to an inoffensive-looking gentleman, who stood awaiting her orders in a deferential and exceedingly unhusband-like manner, and said, haughtily, —

"This will not answer at all. We must seek for other accommodations. Of course we cannot expect to find anything equal to the style of living to which we are accustomed; but, surely, something superior to this may be found."

"But, my dear," the husband ventured to urge, "the storm is so violent, I fear you will expose your health. Would it not be better to try to be contented here for one night, at least?" And the poor man cast a wistful glance at our warm fire.

"Contented here!" was the scornful reply. "How can you propose such an absurdity? Better to ride all night in the rain!" And, with one more look of contempt, our stately visitor swept from our sight, and in a few moments we heard their carriage drive from the door.

After a merry laugh at the great expectations of this unknown princess, and cordial wishes that success might attend her praiseworthy efforts to keep up her accustomed style, we resumed the employments which this little incident had interrupted, and thought no more of the affair until summoned to the tea-table, where, to our great surprise, we found our friend in green, and her worthy spouse, already seated, and doing justice to the good fare before them.

We soon gathered from their conversation that no other accommodations could be procured, and they were reduced to the sad alternative of returning to this despicable place, or passing the night in the carriage. To do the lady justice, she seemed to make the best of her unpleasant situation,—ate plentifully, chatted sociably with those around her, and on our return to the parlor, exerted herself to amuse the company by glowing descriptions of her house, furniture, children, and so forth.

First, the low-studded room excited her indignation. *She* was accustomed to lofty ceilings. It was really difficult to breathe freely here. Then the carpet—how inferior! Absolutely rough to the feet. The chairs were certainly unfit to sit in; and she condescendingly occupied the whole of the sofa, somewhat to the annoyance of an elderly lady and gentleman, who were accustomed to enjoy a little quiet conversation in that part of the room, undisturbed by the younger portion of the company.

It was in vain to try to form an accurate idea of the mansion she endeavored to portray; her answers to our various inquiries only exciting our curiosity more and more.

One of our number, the wag of our little circle, having, in some unknown way, ascertained that our new guests were from "way down East," privately suggested that the canopy of heaven might form the high ceiling referred to, and hinted that no carpet could compare with the *soft, green moss*.

Little attention, however, was paid to these impertinent insinuations, for all were now listening intently to the description of the charms and various accomplishments of the lovely Angelina, the eldest daughter of our entertaining guest.

A form and face so rare
Sure never had been seen

Unequaled beauty, amiable disposition, wonderful acquirements. Gentlemen sighed, and ladies envied, and thus the evening passed away; and we sought our own rooms, where visions of ladies in green, magnificent castles, lovely maidens, and so forth, formed the subject of our night's visions.

Breakfast-time came, and again our new friend appeared,—still in the same green dress, pink ribbons, ear-rings, breastpin, and rings; a singular morning dress, but decidedly uncommon; differing from the vulgar mass; and this was evidently the aim.

The husband sat opposite to her, perfectly quiet and harmless, as usual; attentive to her slightest wishes, but seldom venturing to obtrude a remark.

Knives and forks had just commenced their office, when a slight bustle at the door attracted our attention, and, to our unspeakable astonishment, another lady in green, with pink ribbons, ear-rings, pin, and rings of equal splendor,—in every respect the exact resemblance of her illustrious prototype,—glided into the room, and took a seat at

the table, followed by a pleasant-looking, farmer-like man, dressed in a drab coat and pantaloons.

We have just said she was an exact resemblance of the other, but we mean so far as regards her dress; for in face and form she was widely different, being far below the common height of women, with a good-humored, cheerful expression of countenance, forming a striking contrast to the vinegar-like aspect of her predecessor, to whom she nodded familiarly, and exclaimed in an audible whisper,—

"You are surprised to see me here, neighbor Jones, but I gave my good man no peace until he promised to follow you. I want to see a bit of the world myself. We were very lucky to find you here, for we left home a week after you did. All your folks are well. Angelina bid me say that the lads are doing well, and the cows, pigs, and all the live stock are fat and hearty. I left her up to her eyes in work, churning and getting dinner for the carpenters, who are putting up the addition to your house, which I declare you need bad enough, neighbor. I have often wondered what you could do with such a great family in your snug little nest."

If looks could silence a woman's tongue, surely it would now have been silenced, for the deathly glances which the Amazon in green directed toward her little miniature were really appalling, but, unabashed, she continued,—

"Don't be affronted at my dress. I coaxed husband to sell the old cow and buy me one off the same piece as yours, and I bought my ribbons and all the gew-gaws of the same peddler that you got yours of. He is a real sharper. Angelina says he charged me two shillings more than he did you."

This was too much. The exasperated lady made a hasty exit, followed by her devoted husband, and we saw them no more.

The storm at length ceased, and bright days succeeded, when we fully realized our expected enjoyment of the lovely scenery and the salubrious air around us; and after a week or two of varied pleasures, we sought our own homes, carrying with us the remembrance of the lady in green as a warning to those who aspire to a condition of life above that in which they are placed by an overruling Providence, and in which they are best fitted to be useful to themselves and others.

THE LIFE-INSURANCE POLICY.

BY HENRI MONTCALM.

Chauncey Disbrowe was the most reckless, dare-devil sort of fellow I ever saw. It is necessary that you understand that, else the story I am about to relate will seem incredible. Many a man beside myself remembers how one day, when he and I were in the Montana gold-fields together, and Sacramento Jem (otherwise known as the California Giant) came along, and, pulling up one of our stakes, put it down again to suit himself, — how Chauncey looked up at him coolly, and requested him to put it back where he took it from. Jem laughed coarsely.

"Not much, my bantam," said he. "Who's boss o' this yere ranche, I sh'd like ter know?"

Whereupon Chauncey answered, carelessly, —

"Very well: suit yourself." And, walking away a few steps, turned suddenly, drew a pistol quick as lightning, and shot the bully dead. Then he went back, quite

unconcernedly, and replaced the stake. That was just the "kind of man" Chauncey was, — only let me add, that, in spite of it all, he was a thoroughly good fellow, one of those men whom you can "tie to," as we say out there. There was not a man in the camp but respected him all the more after he shot that fellow.

But Disbrowe had other accomplishments besides his shooting. He was the most perfect gambler I ever knew. Losing or winning was apparently all the same to him. Let the cards turn as they would, he never showed in his face that he cared a picayune either way. Only I, who knew him best, always could tell when he was losing, by his extreme gayety and unconcern. I saw him once, in an hour's time, lose what it had taken him two years of hard work to get, — some thirty thousand dollars' worth of gold; and yet he laughed as merrily over it as though it had been the best joke in the world. And once too I saw him play for a

still higher stake than that, — nothing less than his own life. And, when he found that he had lost, he stood up to pay the forfeit, with a smile so careless and genuine that there was not a man in that crowd of lookers-on, roughs and gamblers though they were, but worshiped him for it. It is of this desperate stake I am going to tell you now.

We were down at "Frisco" one day last winter, Chauncey and I, when all at once he stopped, just before the office of the "Life-and-Death Insurance Company."

"Reddy," said he (my name is Redwood, but I've always been "Reddy" to him), "Reddy, I'm going in for a policy."

"What have you to get insured?" I inquired, wonderingly. I knew he had not a thousand dollars in the world just then. Only a week before he had borrowed five thousand of me, which he had at once deposited in a flourishing faro bank down town, and from which he was not likely soon to draw it out again.

"I have *myself* to insure," he answered. "I don't feel just right about that five thousand dollars. If anything should happen to me you'd lose it sure."

"If anything should happen to you, old boy, I should n't care whether I lost it or not."

"I know it, Reddy; but I should. You are the nearest to me of anybody now. I'm going to take out a policy for twenty thousand dollars, and in your favor. Then, if I go under at any time, you'll be all right."

Of course I objected to this squarely, though to no effect. We entered the office, and Disbrowe announced his errand. He was well known in the city, and much respected notwithstanding his wild life. No one ever spoke of him but as a man of honor. He had no difficulty at all now in obtaining a policy. They knew he was a man who carried "his life in his hand," and who was careless of any peril; but they knew too that he was a hard man to kill. He had been hard-hit more than once, and came out all right. It was a common superstition west of the mountains that Chauncey Disbrowe was not born to be shot. And as for his health, it was simply perfect. A more splendid specimen of physical manhood did not live.

So a policy was made out, — a policy for twenty thousand dollars; and, paying his

first premium at once, Chauncey handed the document to me. I declined to take charge of it. Had I foreseen what was to come of that bit of paper, I would have torn it to atoms on the spot.

"All right," said he, coolly, when I shook my head: "I suppose it's just as well for me to keep it. We're always together." And he buttoned it up in his pocket.

It was not long after this that we went east as far as Denver City; and, as ill-luck would have it, there we fell in with Richmond again. Richmond was a cold-blooded, out-and-out rascal. Chauncey knew that as well as I did, and therefore I never could understand why my friend did not cut the man dead, and have nothing more to do with him. It came out, however, this night we met Richmond at Denver, that Chauncey had lost money to him at cards some time before; and, though the debt ground him a good deal, still, as he could not pay the money, he was to a certain extent in Richmond's power. The latter was a smooth, oily kind of fellow, — one with whom it would be difficult to quarrel.

It was at rather a low place — I think it was a den known as Buckner's Bower — that we met Richmond that evening. As a general thing, I tried to keep Chauncey away from such places; for, as I have said, he was an inveterate gamster, and the very sight of play always gave edge to his appetite. But on this night I did not take much thought in the matter, and I knew he had very little money about him, and I myself had still less.

At most of the tables "sell pitch" seemed to be the chief occupation. There was one, however, in the middle of the room, where, from the larger number of lookers-on, we concluded that "bluff" must be the attraction; and to this table we made our way. True enough, bluff was the game; and, sitting there, coolly shuffling his cards, and betting with unwavering confidence on his own hand, with apparent recklessness, but really with consummate cunning and calculation, was Richmond. He nodded to us, and his eye sought Chauncey's with a peculiar gleam as we drew near.

Disbrowe stood for a long while behind Richmond's chair, looking over that gentleman's hand, and watching his play. As for me, I took little interest in the game, and most of the time was watching Chauncey

himself. I could see by his eyes that the demon of play was again awake in his bosom. Moreover, he despised Richmond, and it provoked him to see how the fellow was gradually fleecing his opponent, a drover from up-country. Not that Richmond was playing an unfair game, but his superior skill and discernment enabled him to judge his hand much more certainly than the other. Chauncey felt that if he could only be in the countryman's place the thing would be a trifle more equal. Once he looked over at me with an imploring glance, as much as to say, "Old fellow, have n't you got any cash about you? I know I could win tonight." But I shook my head; and I was glad too that I could do so honestly. Then I saw Chauncey more than once look wistfully at the diamond on his finger, — a valuable stone, worth something like a thousand dollars. I knew that he prized that ring very highly, and had never allowed himself to risk it.

Presently the drover pushed back his chair, and arose. "I've had enough, I calkerlate," he said, rather crestfallen. "What collatyral I've got I'm ruther disposed to hold on to. Anybody want ter take my place?" And he looked around inquiringly.

Chauncey stepped quickly forward to the empty chair.

"I'll take it," he said, without hesitation. "I'll give you a chance to win what little I have, Rich." And he took out about fifty dollars, and laid them on the table. Richmond did not answer a word, but went on shuffling the pack. On the very first hand Chauncey risked his whole "pile," and lost it.

"Is that the way of it?" he said, pleasantly. "Well, well; let's see what this will do." And he drew the diamond from his finger, and flung it on the table. "You know the ring, Rich. Of course you'll go me a thousand for it?"

Richmond simply bowed, and the game went on. Disbrowe evidently meant to "put it to the test to win or lose it all." Again he kept on betting, with perfect assurance, and staked the entire value of the ring. Then he "called" his opponent's hand, and, upon its being shown, I was surprised and delighted (for I was really feeling anxious about it) to find that my friend had won. Richmond merely bit his lip disdainfully, and motioned Chauncey to cut.

It was Richmond who was leading the betting this time. He ran the stake up to two thousand dollars, the exact amount in Chauncey's possession reckoning the ring; and then the hands were again dropped. I could hardly restrain myself. Chauncey had again won, and had now three thousand dollars, still retaining his ring. I stepped forward and begged him to leave off before he became himself the loser; but at that Richmond spoke up in his cold, sneering way, —

"Mr. Disbrowe will certainly not think of going without giving me satisfaction; especially since he is already in my debt to the amount of sixteen thousand dollars."

Disbrowe sprang to his feet, his eyes fairly blazing.

"Sir," he cried, "none but a coward and a blackguard would speak like that. You shall never fling that debt in my face again, sir. I'll play it out with you tonight if I die for it. Then he unbuttoned his coat, and drew out a paper, which I at once recognized as the insurance policy. "Here," he went on, excitedly, "is a policy on my life for twenty thousand dollars. It is payable to Redwood here. He shall assign it to you, all but five thousand dollars, which I owe him. Then I will put another thousand with it, and play it against the sixteen thousand which I owe you. If I win, I am clear of you forever; if I lose, then" — Disbrowe raised his right hand solemnly in the air, and the whole room was breathless, hanging on his words, which rang out loud and clear, — "then, upon my honor as a gentleman, I will shoot myself dead at this table, and the money will be yours. You know me, Gaunt Richmond; and you know that I will do as I say."

He drew his revolver from his pocket, cocked it, and laid it significantly on the table. Then he sat down again, and looked inquiringly at his adversary.

"In which case, I merely get the sixteen thousand already due me," Richmond answered, with a sneer. "However, inasmuch as the debt was good for just nothing, I accept. Send for a lawyer."

While we were waiting for the notary's appearance, I, with many others in the room, tried to dissuade Chauncey from his desperate purpose; but I knew well we might as well have tried to soften a rock. I offered to raise the sixteen thousand dollars, and pay the debt; but in vain. Noth-

ing would satisfy him but to play out the stake he had proposed. "It's of no use, gentlemen. I know what I'm about," was all we could get out of him. One thing I managed to do, unnoticed by Chauncey or Richmond, and, as far as I knew, by any one else present. I took my revolver, whose chambers had recently been emptied, though the "dead cartridges" were still there, and substituted it for Disbrowe's on the table.

Presently the notary public made his appearance, and the policy was duly assigned to Richmond. Of course I had no choice but to sign the paper. I really felt a good deal as Chauncey did about the debt,—that it *must* be paid. But, standing there, with Disbrowe's loaded revolver in my breast, I made up my mind that, if Chauncey's life was forfeited, Richmond should not long outlive him.

The cards were now dealt. I looked over Chauncey's hand. He certainly had an unusually good one,—one it would have been safe to bet on nine times out of ten. There was indeed but one combination could beat it. The drover looked at it a moment, and then turned to me.

"Look here, Mr. Redwood" (I was well known in *Denver*), "*I'd like to bet sixteen thousand dollars on that hand myself. What d'ye say? I've got the money right here.*"

"But I have n't," I answered.

"Wal," said he, "yer friend thar, he's a winnin' man ter night. Yer see, he's put that thar ring on agin fer ther extry thousand. I'm superstitious, I am. I'll make the bet with yer, an' then, ef you lose, why, I know all about yer. I'll take your note for the money."

I looked into the man's honest, kindly face as he made this proposal, and I saw that he was in earnest. If Chauncey lost, he meant for me to win enough to pay the stake and save his life. I made up my mind at once of course.

"All right: I'll take your bet," I said.

Richmond had merely glanced at his hand, and then laid it, face down, upon the table. "Well," asked he, carelessly, "are you prepared to back your hand?"

"Yes, sir," Chauncey answered, curtly.

"For how much."

"Sixteen thousand dollars."

Richmond raised his eyebrows just a trifle at this. "Very well," said he, quietly: "I call you," and showed his hand. It was

the one combination to be dreaded. *Chauncey had lost.*

There was an awful stillness all through the room. Chauncey just glanced at the other's hand, and perceived that he had lost; but not a muscle of his face changed.

"I am quite satisfied, sir," he said, to Richmond. "You will let me redeem the ring?" And he took up the diamond, putting down a thousand dollars in its place. "Reddy, old fellow, you'll wear the ring for the sake of old times? And here are a couple of thousands you had better take. I sha'n't want it, you know." Then he turned to Richmond again, and, saying, "I am glad that you and I are quits, sir," he suddenly, before any one could lift a hand, seized the revolver, placed it close to his temple, and pulled the trigger. Of course no report followed.

He glanced at the weapon in surprise; and, understanding at once the deception, he looked around at me. It was the first time I had ever met that angry flash in his eyes that others had felt so often.

"You had no right to do that, Redwood," he said, sternly. "Nor was it kind. It would have been all over now. Where is my revolver?"

But now the drover came forward.

"Here's suthin' better 'n that," he said, hastily. "Yer friend here hes jest won what you hev lost. Yer'd better take back yer life, and let him pay ther debt."

Disbrowe looked at me again; and, taking the money, I explained just how I had "hedged" his bet by backing Richmond's hand. Chauncey's look did not change in the least.

"Very well," he said. "I do not see but that is perfectly fair. You'll lend me the money of course?"

Then he turned to the table and picked up the policy again, putting down the money in exchange, acting all the while as though life and death were one and the same thing to him.

"Wal, by Mustapha!" ejaculated the drover, admiringly. "That feller's game every time. He's wuth savin', he is."

All this while Richmond sat there with a silent sneer. "Hold on, sir!" he said, as Chauncey took up the policy. "I don't want your money. I prefer the original stake, your life. I have a right to that, I think."

Chauncey looked at him, deliberating

coolly with himself. "Well," said he at length, "perhaps you are right. How is it, gentlemen?"

And he looked around upon the faces about him.

"No, no, no!" burst forth in a kind of indignant roar from the crowd. "Put out the blackguard! Throw him into the street!"

Then Chauncey's voice rang out again "No, no, gentlemen: let him alone. May be it is his right. If so, — if my life belongs to him, — let him come and take it!" And he drew a big bowie-knife from his breast, and stood there looking so fierce and defiant that it would have taken a braver man than Gaunt Richmond to claim his blood.



THE LOST BABY.

BY EARL MARBLE.

Where is my baby? For over an hour I have been sitting here by the window, watching the feathery snowflakes chasing each other through the air of the mild winter day, and wondering why he is not here to greet the beautiful, poetical sight with his uproarious baby-glee.

Where is my baby? Where is the prattling, crowing toddler who is the very life of the house wherein he rules as supremely as though he were the king of all the lands of the continent? Where is he? I hear no voice crowing in the nursery, no feet pattering around over the oil-cloths of the entries, and I see no little hands busy with the forbidden beauties of the parlor what-not. Where, where is he?

Ah! he must be asleep. He must be taking his morning nap. The little eyes looked heavy when I saw him an hour ago, and the feet did not move as briskly one after the other as they do when they are not so weary. Bridget has probably put him to sleep in his little crib, where he sleeps the sleep of innocence, and will awake more joyous and brighter-eyed than before.

But my baby does not know what he is missing. He does not know what he might see if he were with me by the window, looking out upon the busy street.

Here are the boys trying to make snowballs of the light, feathery snow, that refuses to adhere, but that, failing to form into missiles, they scoop into each others' faces, as the old-time farmer used to scoop his grain from behind his fanning-mill into the ready grain-wagon. How much baby Freddy would enjoy this, to be sure! He would be quite wild to join the revelers. How uproarious the boys are! If the snow were only deeper, some of them would certainly get buried under the quick-succeeding avalanches.

And here comes the old tin-peddler who made such a friend of my baby, the last time he was here, by giving him a whistle. The old man looks disappointed as he sees me sitting alone at the window, and I suppose is wondering where his little friend is. What! what is this? A drum for the baby!

"Sure, ma'am, yez been very koind to me, and bought piles o' things for the baby, ma'am, and give me a big lift, so yez do. God bless ye, ma'am! And is the little bit of a gintleman well, ma'am? Sure, and is he takin' his nap, did he say? May the howly Virgin guard him, and the swate angels shpake to him in whispers while he's ashlape, and make him shmile till ye could n't cover his dimples with a nickel! The drum, ma'am,—it was my little Teddy's birthday present three weeks come Sunday; but the angels took him the very day. And the drum's only a mockery now, wid the still house. May yez niver know fwhat a still house is, ma'am! And the drum's yours, ma'am, for the little boy,—God bless him! Good-day, ma'am!"

A drum for the baby! Why, the old man must have taken a decided fancy to Blue-eyes, to bring such a nice present. For it is a nice present, even if the boys do make the back-yards hideous with din, and wake all the babies, and drive distracted all the sick people, within a dozen houses distant. But even this is better than urging men to conflict with arms unless a righteous cause is imperiled. Pray God, my little baby, that, ere you have grown to maturity, the world—at least our portion of it—will have outgrown all warlike growths, though we all know that it will take a long time to eradicate the evil seeds sown broadcast during the dark days of 1861-5.

And here comes the great wagon from the laundry, already quite full of baskets and bundles whose contents are to be cleansed at that labor-saving institution, by means of which all the horrors and sour looks and cold dinners of the dreadful Monday are saved to its patrons. Almost full the wagon is; but there is room for the great basket that has been sitting in the corner since early morning. And this man, with the jolly, good-looking Irish face,—for an Irish face can be jolly and good-looking when it is not begrimed with tobacco, and burnt up with whiskey,—this man, too, misses the baby usually around to crow at him when he comes in sight.

There, baby: he has taken the basket, and gone, and you still asleep. Ah! it is not only children who lose when they are asleep. Many a sight of beauty would greet the vision of both men and women, slumbering in sloth that is not rest, and forgetfulness that is not recreation, did they but open the eyes of the spirit, and look about for the beauties everywhere visible, like nimbus halos around the heads of the divinities of hope and love and happiness that lend their presence daily to those who will watch and wait.

And now it has cleared away, and the sun pours its soft light upon the garment nature has woven for the earth; and where is the baby that plays with the sunbeam on the carpet?

One o'clock. An hour of the afternoon woven into the shroud of the dead past, and the baby still asleep.

With the clanging of the bell comes another sound,—one that the baby delights in. The old hand-organ man is one of his greatest friends. The old man makes music that is dearer to baby's ears than the choicest strains, articulated with the most artistic verve, of the great masters of music. And today the little red-jacketed monkey is more provocative of laughter than ever. But so it is ever with the world. The pleasures at the party we did not attend, the beauty of the sunset we did not witness, the fascinations of the capital we have not visited, the superior attractions of the girl we did not marry, are always greater in our mind's eye than all others. Why is it? Or is it not really so, only seeming so because the greater enjoyments and pleasures of life are in anticipation and reflection rather than in participation and realization?

Another hour has flown; and with the sound of the two-o'clock bell comes a shout and a rush of children. More of the baby's friends. What can possess him, to sleep so? What a lot of disappointed faces as they see no one sitting at the window but the baby's mother with her sewing instead of the little fellow whom it is for! Not but that they greet me with smiles; but there is not the depth to them that there is when Freddy is the object.

Oh, dear me! here comes the purse-proud Mrs. Robinson. For the first time I am glad that Freddy is asleep. The tin-peddler, the laundryman, and the man with the

hand-organ, are all his friends; but he always shrinks from the glance of Mrs. Robinson's cold, dead-black eye, and the pressure of her pulseless lip or cheek. Ah, little Freddy! a world of wisdom and philosophy is oftentimes hidden beneath the little eyelids of such as thee, though they have looked upon the world's wonders but a few sunny months.

Half-past two, and the baby's father came home to dinner.

"Where is the baby?"

"Asleep."

Then the step was lighter, although he looked as though he would like to wake him up to have a romp with him.

The bell rang for dinner, and Bridget made her appearance.

"Where 's the baby, mum?" asked she, moving to go out again. "I thought he was with you, and—and"—

"Why, I'm sure I don't know. I supposed you got him to sleep. I have n't seen him since about ten o'clock, the time he usually has his nap."

"Asleep, mum! Sure I have n't seen him since breakfast. I waited for you to ring the bell for me to take him; but you did n't, and I kept on with my work."

"Oh, well," I answered, "he's probably got sleepy, and found his way to one of the beds himself. Go and find out where he is."

I tried to content myself with this view of the case; but I sat down to the table, feeling far from easy.

We had just begun to eat when Bridget came in, looking frightened.

"Sure, mum, I've looked the house over, and the little boy is n't anywhere to be found."

My uneasiness now ripened into foreboding; and Harry sprang up from the table, looking wildly around as if he would hardly believe that baby was not close at hand.

"Have you looked everywhere, Bridget?"

"Yes, mum."

We were not satisfied, and went over every part of the house,—in and under every bed, into every closet, under every table, and in every out-of-the-way place that we thought it would be possible for him to get into. But it was all to no purpose. Although at almost every step I seemed to see his bright face peering at me from every corner, and from the heavy re-

cess of the great arm-chair in the parlor, the search availed us nothing, and we gave it up with saddened hearts and cloudy eyes.

Then, after every search had failed, John went out on the street to make inquiries, and apprise the police of the loss.

After he had gone, I sat down to the table, and tried to finish my dinner; but the food choked me, and I took my old station at the window, and breathlessly waited the return of my husband with news of our lost darling.

Then, as I covered my face with my handkerchief while time flew on, and neither husband nor son came, I thought of him as getting out of the door by some means, and being stolen by gypsies; or as being run over by some careless driver; or— What did I not dream of, or apprehend?

Then I searched my heart to see if I had ever been impatient, and if any remembrance of past unkindness would haunt me should he never return. Ah! how deeply do these darts sting when the coffin-lid hides all that we held so dear!

Then he came up to my vision as plainly as ever he had appeared to me during the year and a half that had flown by since I had been his mother. I thought of those eyes that ever seemed to be the mirrors of his father's love for me; of the little feet that I had prayed so earnestly to have kept from the paths of sin; of the cherry upper lip, that it was hard to realize would ever be shaded by a mustache; of the wealth of golden curls that were so thick that they made the head droop uneasily to one side like a half-blown moss-rose-bud under the weight of its own moss; the golden curls that I have so often twined around my fingers when all wet from the morning bath; the light curls that I have toyed with while singing the evening lullaby; the rich curls that my tears have fallen upon when his eyes were shut in sleep, and which glistened upon the sunny wealth like drops of dew among the golden-blossomed jasmine-vines. Ah! never Persian looms wove richer silk than this glistening wealth into world-wide renown, and never the love of Medea sought such a wonderful golden fleece.

My meditations were interrupted by hearing quick footsteps upon the threshold, and coming into the entry. I leaped from my seat, and reached the door just as it was thrown open. It was John, but he was

alone. Although I saw this at a glance, still some faint hope whispered to my heart that he had heard something of little Freddy.

"Not a word, Julia," he said, and I could see the despair that had settled upon his face. "I have been everywhere. It seems strange how he could have got out-of-doors. Have you all confidence in the servants? He might have been taken, with the connivance of one of them, in hopes of a reward. Such things have been frequent in foreign cities for years; and it was but the other day that I read of the arrival of some professional women child-stealers from London."

I could only groan at such a prospect; but John continued,—

"That is to me the brightest view of the case. In such a contingency, we shall get him again some time; but what a state of uncertainty will intervene!"

The remaining fragment of the afternoon and the early part of the evening passed drearily enough. John had done all that he could, but still he thought he must keep looking; but I was too nervous and hysterical to be left alone, and he staid in. The time dragged slowly by as I rolled uneasily on the large sofa, and he paced the floor. Two dreadful hours we passed thus. I have since thought that two more such would have sent us both to the insane asylum.

Suddenly we were startled by the ringing of the bell. Possibly some news. No: only a neighbor to learn if we had heard anything, and to condole with us.

Then there was another ring.

"Oh, dear!" said John. "More callers! I wish they would stay away. This idea, when any one is laboring under grief or affliction, of coming and talking about it, is too much like irritating a wound, and keeping it open, when it is trying to heal. Of all platitudes, this is the most disgusting."

While John had been talking, the girl had gone to the door.

As he uttered the last words, there was a joyous scream in the entry.

"O ma'an!" cried the girl, bursting into the room, "here 's the baby!"

This was but a small part of what the overjoyed girl said. She fairly danced in her joy.

John and I were not long in crossing the room, and interrupting the girl in her joy.

We met at the threshold a large, rawboned Irishman, and in his arms, wrapped up in strange garments, was our Freddy. I made one spring for him, and seized the crowing, overjoyed baby in my arms; while the father, who was more dignified, made sundry efforts to control his feelings, but finally gave way, and great tears of joy chased each other down his cheeks.

"He's yours, mum, I s'pose?"

"Of course he is, God bless him!"

"Where did you find him?"

"Sure, an' I did n't find him at all. It was Pat, the man that drives the tame, as found him. He was all cuddled up asleep in the basket of clothes the mon tuk from yeez to the laundry." Sure I started with him here as soon as they could spare me, and as soon as the little fellow had his nap out."

We think seriously of changing our baby's name, and calling him "Falstaff."

THE LUDLOW DISAPPEARANCE.

BY HENRI MONTCALM.

I was sitting alone one day when a lady came in,—a widow, I surmised, from her weeds,—genteelly dressed, and still pretty. Her first words to the point were,—

“Do you remember the Ludlow disappearance two weeks ago?”

I did have a distinct recollection that a man named Ludlow had disappeared a fortnight before, down Providence way somewhere. I took down my scrap-book, and presently came upon the following. It was my business, you see, to keep a record of such things. It sometimes comes handy.

\$500 REWARD will be paid for the recovery of the body of Brightman Ludlow, who was drowned in the vicinity of Watch Hill, Rhode Island, on the evening or night of the 31st inst. Deceased was a dark, fine-looking man, with black hair and mustache, slenderly built, and nearly six feet in height. When last seen he had on a gray Scotch business suit (sack coat), a straw hat with black ribbon, patent leather shoes, and fancy socks of fine material. Wore a valuable diamond on the little finger of his left hand. Also wore diamond studs, and a heavy gold watch-chain, with small hunting-case Swiss watch. Address, &c.

Beneath this notice was a larger paragraph cut from a paper of later date, and giving a detailed account of Mr. Ludlow's disappearance. He was, as might be in-

ferred from the description of his person, a gentleman of wealth and social importance. He had been staying at Watch Hill for the summer,—that is, his family remained there, and he came on frequently from New York, where he was in business. On the afternoon of the 31st of July he had put off by himself in a small sail-boat, in spite of the fact that he was quite unaccustomed to the water, and in spite of the repeated assurance of the light-house keeper that a storm was at hand. He had sailed away up the coast line, and that was the last that had been seen of him. A thunder squall had come up shortly after, the wind had risen to a gale, and it seems had been too much for the little boat. She had been found the next morning bottom side up, with an old letter firmly fastened to her keel by the point of Mr. Ludlow's pen-knife. On the envelope of this letter were hastily scrawled with a pencil these few terrible words:

“The squall has capsized me. I've turned her over, and am clinging to her, but I can't hold out much longer. I am drifting toward Block Island. God bless my dear wife and babies.
B. LUDLOW.”

"Well, sir?" said the lady, as I finished the account and looked up.

"Well, ma'am," I answered, "is there anything peculiar about the case? It appears, after all, to be nothing more than a case of accidental drowning."

"That is just the point, sir. It appears to be that; but as a matter of fact I do not believe that Brightman Ludlow was drowned at all!"

"What! Do you suppose he has been murdered?" I inquired, in some astonishment.

"I do not believe that he is dead!"

"May I ask your reasons?"

"I learned only yesterday that his business affairs were much involved,—in fact that he had been systematically robbing his partner for months. They have been keeping the matter quiet for reasons of their own. Just put the fact, however, beside another; viz., that the day before the accident I put into his hands for deposit some forty thousand dollars in bonds, of which he could not possibly have disposed. And yet since his death they are not to be found, nor any account of them; and he was not the man to keep them on his person under ordinary circumstances, especially when he was going out upon the water. Add to all this still further that Mr. Ludlow was excessively timid about boats, and without strong reason would never have gone out alone, and in the face of the light-keeper's warning. And would not his body have been discovered before this, when so large a reward has been offered? I tell you, sir, Brightman Ludlow is as much alive at this moment as you and I are!"

"May I ask your relation to the deceased?" I now said.

"I am his wife's sister,—Mrs. Craddock."

I sat in silence for a while, thinking over the affair. Here was the opinion of a woman, but of a woman whom I could see was a sharp-sighted, practical person, and I felt it might be worth a great deal. Her suspicions had been breathed to no one except myself. She wished me to go down to Watch Hill and look into the matter secretly. If I found nothing to confirm her view of the case she would give it up; otherwise she could never rest satisfied. I questioned her a while longer, and consented to do as she wished.

A few days after that I registered under an assumed name at the L— House, pass-

ing for a gentleman of means spending a few weeks at the sea-side. The Ludlow family had returned to New York, but the affair was still talked of, and I heard the story repeated several times. By careful questioning here and there I gathered certain facts that, if nothing more, served to convert me thoroughly to Mrs. Craddock's theory.

The light-house keeper was my chief source of information. After listening to his account of the matter I asked him,—

"Where did you say the wind was that afternoon?"

"'Bout sou'east, sir, an' workin' round to nuth'rd 'n' east'rd."

"But how could he have been drifting toward Block Island with the wind to the eastward?"

"Who says he was driftin' toward Block Island?"

"He says so on that envelope."

The old man opened his eyes.

"Why," said he, "that's onpossible. 'Twas much as he could do to get ther skiff off shore when he set out. Besides, she was picked up nex' mornin' over there to west'rd in Fisher's Island Sound. He must 'a' ben considerably mixed up in his reck'nin'. An' no wonder. Ef, he'd hed his senses about him, too, he'd 'a' knowed enuff ter lash himself to ther skiff's bottom. There was plenty o' rope in her."

I drew my own conclusions from all this, and said nothing. Pretty soon the man got to talking of his boat,—a large one, moored off shore,—thinking perhaps to find a patron in me.

"Is she fast?" I absently inquired.

"Fast! Wal, now, you've jest said it. There a'n't a boat on the Sound that kin show the 'Norah' her heels,—'less, mebbe, it's Kittridge's, over on Fisher's Island. That boat o' his kin go in a breeze, an' no mistake. But the 'Norah' carries a tremenjous lot o' sail, yer see. Why, it's big as his'n is when I've got two reefs in. He a'n't nowhar in a light wind. Let's see: he ha'n't ben over sence Mr. Ludlow was drowned. I remember he came over and took him off the very day before he took himself off."

I pricked up my ears.

"Was Mr. Ludlow accustomed to go off with him?" I asked.

"O Lord, no. He never see Kittridge afore. But he was down here when the

'Arrow' came in, an' I was tellin' him, what a character the old feller was,—they do, say he's no better than a second-hand pirate,—an' so Mr. Ludlow was interested in him, an' wanted him to take him off for a sail."

This was enough for me for the present, and I changed the subject.

"I would like to try your boat tomorrow," I said. "Can you go with her?"

"Wal, Chuck kin, ef I can't." Chuck was his boy. "When ye want ter go?"

"Oh, in the morning, I suppose, if everything is favorable."

The next morning, with a light breeze from the southwest, Chuck and I started out in the "Norah;" and in accordance with my directions the boat was headed for Fisher's Island. It took us two hours, with a long tack and two short ones, to make the east point of the island. Old Kittredge, as I had learned from Chuck, lived all by himself in a hut, quite a way around on the south shore.

"I wish the old cuss was out in the 'Arrow' this mornin'," Chuck remarked, as we were gliding along near the shore. "This is jest our wind. By jingo!" he presently added, "I b'lieve that's him, now. See there!" And he pointed out to me the corner of a sail crawling along over the land.

A few moments after that a large cat-rigged boat came fully into sight. I ran the thing over in my head, and concluded I would like to make the ex-pirate's acquaintance.

"Chuck," said I, "are you sure you can outsail him this morning?"

"Dead sure, sir, ef it don't come on ter blow."

"Well, I'll tell you what I want. I want you to run up alongside, so I can jump on board of the 'Arrow,' and then sheer off, paying no attention whatever to anything I say, and go back home without me. Here,"—and I put a bank-note in his hand,—"just say you landed me up here somewhere."

He looked a good deal puzzled, but took the money and said nothing.

Old Kittredge seemed disposed to avoid us; but Chuck handled the "Norah" beautifully, and we quickly overhauled the "Arrow." As we drew up alongside, taking position between the latter boat and the wind, Chuck suddenly let the "Norah" fall off, bringing her bow for a single instant within less than two feet of the "Arrow"'s

stern. And during that instant I, who had before this gone forward, made a desperate leap, and then there I was in the same boat with my ex-pirate!

Kittredge came up into the wind at once, supposing that I had lost my balance, and jumped to save myself from falling overboard.

"What's ther fule mean, lettin' go his sheet that 'ere way?" he growled. "Why don't he come about?"

But Chuck had his instructions; and although I added my own cries to those of the old man, he kept straight on, only turning a moment to put his thumb to his nose in a suggestive manner.

"What does the young idiot mean? He shall pay dearly for this!" I said, angrily. "What am I to do, I should like to know? Can you, sir, take me over to the Hill?"

"No!" responded the old man, shortly and gruffly.

"But I'll pay you."

"No, you won't."

"Do you mean to say you won't land me?"

"Ye come on board o' your own accord; ye may git ashore as best ye kin."

This was certainly novel treatment; and had it not suited me precisely I might have lost my temper.

"Very well," I said, good-humoredly. "If my stay on board is to be permanent, I'll make myself at home. I think I'll take a nap." And, stretching myself out in the shadow of the sail on the roof of the cabin, I closed my eyes, and was very soon, to all intents and purposes, fast asleep. I had taken good care, however, to place myself in such a position that I could watch my strange shipmate through my half-closed eyelids. Somehow or other I rather distrusted him. He stood there at the helm humming an old sea-song, now closely watching the sail, and now regarding me so long and so unpleasantly that I felt sure he was considering the chances of getting rid of me. Presently he put the boat about, and stood in toward the shore.

Five minutes more might have passed, when all at once, lying there with my ear close to the deck, I fancied I heard a slight rustling, as when straw is moved. I listened intently, closing my eyes, and for the moment forgetting my companion entirely. Once more I heard the same sound, and then a faint sigh, as of a man waking from

slumber. I was no longer in doubt. *There was a third person on board the "Arrow"!*

This discovery, entirely unexpected as it was, was certainly a little startling. I had scarcely made it, however, when I felt a strong grasp seize me by the hip and shoulder. I sprang up and threw my arms tightly around old Kittredge, just in time to save myself from being pitched into the shallow water near the shore. It appeared that he intended to land me without asking my consent at all.

"How now!" I shouted, indignantly. "What are you up to, old man?"

The rascal was ready enough with his explanation.

"Up to!" snarled he. "Ef I hedn't ketcht ye es I did, ye'd 'a' gone over the side. Ye've ben asleep. Le' go me, will ye! Don't ye see she's luffin'?"

All this was so plausible that I had not a word to say, although I knew that he was lying.

"What are you doing in-shore here?" I asked, sharply.

"Goin' to land you."

"But I don't propose to land!"

"Ye don't?" opening his eyes.

"No; and, what's more, I think I'll go below and turn in, where I won't be in danger of rolling overboard."

I got up and moved toward the cabin hatch. The doors were closed, and the slide drawn aft. The padlock hung in the staple.

"Here, none o' that! Come out o' thar!" he shouted; but I had already flung open the doors. Until I did so, I am frank to confess I had not the slightest suspicion of what was to follow.

There in the middle of the cabin, standing as though he had just left a berth, with a half-terrified, wholly desperate expression on his dark face, was a man, so tall that he was obliged to stoop very much in the low cabin, and whom, in spite of his changed dress and shaven lip, I knew in an instant

from the published description,—knew beyond the shadow of a doubt to be *Brightman Ludlow*.

I had been in trying situations before now, and I thought quickly. Swift as lightning I slammed the doors to again, secured them with the hasp, and turned toward old Kittredge.

And not a second too soon. He was coming for me with the heavy tiller, which he had unshipped for the purpose, — no insignificant weapon, I assure you. But I was too quick for him, and had whipped out my revolver.

"Re-ship your tiller, and haul your sheet aft!" I commanded, sternly; and after an instant's hesitation he obeyed. I seated myself on the cabin hatch.

"Now, my sea-faring friend," I continued, coolly, "I'll relieve you of the command of this craft. You'll be kind enough to run her straight around the island and into New London. And if you dare disobey, you old cast-off pirate, I'll shoot you dead! Come, sir! look sharp! 'bout ship at once!"

He saw that I meant it, and, realizing his helplessness, did as I told him. We got into New London at three o'clock in the afternoon, the wind having freshened somewhat. I sent some boys I saw on the dock for an officer, and with his help easily secured my cabin passenger.

I was quite right, of course, about its being Mr. Ludlow. It appeared that he had made arrangements with old Kittredge to come out and take him off the skiff on the afternoon of the "drowning," and he had been hiding with him on Fisher's Island ever since. I was just in time, for the old man was taking him over to Long Island that very morning. Ludlow had a great deal of stolen property in his possession; and among the rest, easily identified of course, was Mrs. Craddock's forty thousand dollars in bonds.

THE MAN IN THE MOON, AND HIS COMPANIONS.

BY PROFESSOR JAMES MACKINTOSH.

Amongst the superstitions yet lingering in the minds of mankind, none, perhaps, is more universal than that of the man in the moon. In England he is chiefly immortalized by the old nursery rhyme, but no further details are given of his proceedings. German legends are, however, more communicative, and sundry traditions relate his history, varying in different parts of the country.

A Swabian mother at Derendingen tells her child that a man was once working in his vineyard on Sunday, and after having pruned all his vines, he made a bundle of the shoots he had just cut off, laid it in his basket and went home. According to one version the vines were stolen from a neighbor's vineyard. When taxed either with sabbath-breaking, or with the theft, the culprit stoutly protested his innocence, and finally exclaimed, "If I have committed such a crime, may I go to the moon!" After his death, this fate duly befell him, and there he remains to this day, condemned to eat molten lead as a punishment. The Black Forest peasantry say that the dark spots visible in the moon are caused by a man being spellbound there. He stole

a bundle of wood on Sunday, because he thought on that day he should be unmolested by the foresters. But he had not gone far with it when he met a stranger, who was none other than the Almighty himself. After reproving the thief for not keeping the sabbath-day holy, God said he must be punished; but he might choose whether he would be banished to the sun or the moon. The man chose the latter, declaring he would rather freeze in the moon than burn in the sun, and thus the "Besenmannle" or "Broom-man" came into the moon with his faggot on his back. Some say that the Almighty set light to the faggot and it burns perpetually, in order that the bearer may not be frozen to death. At Waltenburg in the Grisons, the tale is somewhat different. A poor woman besought a "Senner" to give her a little milk, which he roughly refused to do. Thereupon she wished he might go to the coldest place in existence, which is the moon, and he is there visible with his milk-pail.

The man in the moon frequently figures in North-German legends. Kuhn relates a tradition in the Havel country. One Christmas Eve a peasant felt a great desire to eat

cabbage, and having none himself, he slipped into his neighbor's garden to cut some. Just as he had filled his basket, the Christ Child rode past on his white horse and said, "Because thou hast stolen on the holy night, thou shalt immediately sit in the moon with thy basket of cabbage." No sooner said than done, and the criminal is still undergoing his penalty. At Paderborn in Westphalia, the crime committed was not theft, but hindering people from attending church on Easter Day by placing a thorn-bush in the field-gate through which they had to pass.

In the neighborhood of Wittingen, the man is said to be banished to the moon, because he tied up his brooms on Maundy Thursday; and at Dellingshofen, of having mown his meadows on Sunday.

Different versions are related in Limburg, where the man in the moon is believed to have stolen wood on Easter morning; while at Hemer in Westphalia, people say he was engaged in fencing his field on Good Friday, and had just poised a bunch of thorns on his fork, when he was at once transported to the moon. Some of the Hemer peasants declare that the moon is not only inhabited by a man with his thorn-bush and pitchfork, but likewise by a woman churning. They are husband and wife, and both broke the sabbath, the man by fencing his field, and the woman by churning her butter, during the hours of divine service.

An ancient Northern fable states that Mani (the Moon) kidnapped two children called Bil and Hinki from the earth, whilst they were employed in drawing water from the well Byrgir, bearing on their shoulders the pail Sægr on the yoke Simul. These children follow Mani, and are plainly visible from the earth.

This myth of the child-stealing Moon Man, which existed throughout the North and also in Germany, evidently received a Christian coloring in later times. The idea of the theft was retained, but the chief stress is laid on the observance of the Christian festival. The culprit does not suffer for stealing the wood, but mainly for committing the sin on the Lord's Day. This interpretation may have originated in the Book of Numbers, of Moses commanding the Israelite to be stoned who had gathered wood on the sabbath-day. Grimm says he cannot trace the exact period when the

Northern fable first appeared in Germany, but he has no doubt of its great antiquity.

All nations seem to have had a curious desire to account for the spots in the moon.

According to the Hindoos, Chandras, the God of the Moon, bears a hare in his arms. The Mongolians also believe that the spots represent a hare. One of their deities transformed himself into a hare to feed a starving wayfarer; and in honor of this act of virtue the figure of a hare was thenceforth visible in the moon. The natives of Ceylon have a somewhat similar legend. When Buddha sojourned as a hermit on earth, he one day lost his way in a forest, and after long wanderings he met a hare, who thus addressed him: "I can help thee. Do thou take the right-hand path, and I will guide thee out of this wilderness."

"I thank thee," returned Buddha, "but I am poor and starving, and am unable to requite thy kindness."

"If thou art hungry," replied the hare, "light a fire, kill and eat me."

Buddha lighted a fire as desired, and the hare immediately leaped in; but Buddha now displayed his supernatural powers, and, tearing the hare from the flames, he placed it in the moon, where it still abides. This story is related by a French traveler in Ceylon, and he adds that his telescope was often borrowed by the natives, in order that they might inspect the hare in the moon.

Chaucer describes the moon as Lady Cynthia;

Her gite was gray and full of spottis blake,

And on her brest a chorle paintid ful even
Bearing a bush of thornis on his bake

Which for his theft might climb no ner the
heven.

Shakspeare also alludes to the man in the moon in "The Tempest" and "The Midsummer's Night's Dream."

According to one tradition, the figure is that of Isaac, bearing the faggot on his shoulders for his own sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Another calls the man, "Cain with a bundle of briers." Dante mentions this both in his "Paradiso" and "Inferno." There is a pretty mediæval legend which describes the moon as St. Mary Magdalene, and the spots on it as her repentant tears.

The following Westphalian legends are evidently not of Christian origin. A youth, visiting his sweetheart at night, wished to enter her room by the window, while the

moon was shining brightly. He, therefore, took a bramble with which he attempted to darken it; but he remained hanging to the thorn-bush.

A tipsy man, coming out of the public-house, threatened the moon with a bramble he held in his hand. This audacious conduct enraged the moon, who drew the man up, and there he is to this day.

Mullenhoff says that the people of Rantum, in the Schleswig island of Sylt, declare that the man in the moon is a giant, who bends down at full tide to scoop up the water and pour it on the earth. At low tide he stands upright, resting from his labors, so that the water may subside.

We now come to the superstitions attached to the power of the moon, and prominent amongst them is the idea that no work may be undertaken in moonshine. The Swabian people consider it a great sin to spin or knit by moonlight, as though one could not do enough by day. That is the reason why the moon does not give sufficient light for any work. Whoever ventures to spin, for example, weaves a rope for the neck of some relation. There are several stories illustrating the danger of transgressing this rule.

A poor woman at Brackenheim, in Swabia, gained her livelihood by spinning, and her diligence was so great that she spent whole nights at her distaff; in order to save the expense of oil, she never lighted her lamp when there was a full moon. As she thus sat spinning in the moonshine, and the church-clock was tolling the hour of midnight, the door opened and a strange man entered. He had his arms full of distaffs and said: "If thou dost not spin all these full this night, it will be all over with thee, and I shall come and fetch thee." With these words he vanished, leaving the woman in a terrible fright. Luckily she bethought herself of merely spinning the distaffs once over, and in this way she completed her task before daybreak. The stranger, who was the Devil himself, reappeared at the appointed time and silently took the spindles away with him. But never again did the woman spin by moonlight.

A similar tale is told at Tübingen, only there the Evil One manifested his displeasure at being balked of his prey by leaving such an odor of brimstone behind him, that no one could live in the room for the next

six months. A maiden of Pfullingen was knitting at midnight by moonshine, when an apparition appeared at the window, offering her knitting-needles, on which she immediately threw down her work and fled from the room.

Schonwerth says that the peasants of the Upper Palatinate never leave their carts or agricultural implements out of doors when the moon is shining, as its beams would break them. For the same reason, lines must not be left hanging in the moonshine, and superstitious folks always warn their friends against sleeping in the moonlight, and bathing, or drinking from any fountain or well, on which the rays of the moon fall. It is also unsafe to dance by moonlight, because the surface of the earth is then as thin as cobweb, and the spirits under ground are lured upwards by the music. The moon is likewise said to blacken the complexion, to promote the decay of fish and meat, and even to blunt the edge of razors.

The precepts concerning the phases of the moon are very numerous. Throughout Germany, except in Tyrol, where the contrary rule prevails, hair must be cut as the moon increases. Eggs laid in the first quarter of the moon are good to eat and for setting, but those laid in the last quarter will never produce chickens. Cattle, poultry, and shellfish are all fatter when the moon is full. Rye must be sown as the moon waxes, but peas, barley, and wheat when it wanes.

Weddings ought always to be solemnized during the new moon, otherwise the marriage will be unfortunate; and every peasant in East Prussia, Pomerania, and Hesse avoids if possible being married during the last quarter of the moon. But washing, chopping firewood, and killing pigs may be done at that period. Indeed, the Servian women positively refuse to wash any clothes in the first quarter of the moon, as they declare the whole of the linen would be creased and be soon torn.

The moon plays a great part in popular remedies, sympathetic cures, and so forth, despite, or perhaps because, its light is believed to be poisonous.

The Tyrolese cure freckles by washing them at night with water in which the moon shines. In the Harz Mountains and Silesia, the remedy for goitres is to turn one's face to the increasing moon three evenings running, then take a stone, silently touch the

swelling with it, and throw it over the left shoulder. Meier quotes a Swabian charm for toothache. When the crescent moon re-appears for the first time, the sufferer must gaze at it steadfastly, and repeat thrice, "I see the moon with two points; my teeth shall neither shoot nor ache until I see the moon with three points."

Crabs caught during full moon, and then burnt alive and ground to powder, cure hydrophobia. Of course the moon necessarily assists at all deeds of sorcery, such as casting magic bullets, the manufacture of a divining-rod, and the like.

The following recipe for avenging one's self on one's enemies is given by Kuhn in Westphalia: "When the new moon falls on a Tuesday, go out before daybreak to a stake selected beforehand, turn to the east, and say, 'Stick, I grasp thee in the name of the Trinity.' Take thy knife, and say, 'Stick, I cut thee in the name of the Trinity, that thou mayst obey me and chastise any one whose name I mention.' Then peel the stick in two places, to enable thee to carve these words: Abia, obia, sabia. Lay a smock-frock on thy threshold and strike it hard with the stick, at the same time naming the person who is to be beaten. Though he be many miles away, he will suffer as much as if he were on the spot."

The ancient Greeks and Romans considered the moon to be a protection against the evil eye, and they hung small moons made of metal round their necks as amulets. Even the wives and horses of the Romans wore them. The custom has not yet disappeared in Italy and the East. Some years ago Neapolitan ladies used to wear small silver half-moons on their arms, as a preservative against epilepsy, which popular belief has always connected with the evil eye. The talismanic crescent has ever been the badge of Islam, and it still glitters on the minarets.

Before quitting our subject we must add a few traditions respecting the other denizens of the sky, for although the man in the moon is the chief hero of celestial legendary lore, his companions in the firmament are by no means ignored.

Much less superstition is attached to the sun than the moon. Plants possessing magical properties must be gathered, if not by moonlight, yet at any rate before sunrise, for the first appearance of his rays immediately dispels all enchantment, and

drives back the spirits to their subterranean abodes. Twice a year the sun changes its course,—descending in summer, ascending in winter. In Pagan times both the summer and winter solstice were seasons of great festivity.

Swabian people believe that on Easter Day, or as some say on Ascension Day, the rising sun leaps thrice for joy. At Rotenburg, on the Neckar, the sun is supposed to perform these antics on Christmas Eve, the period of the winter solstice. On Good Friday the sun mourns over the crucifixion, and does not shine until three o'clock in the afternoon. In some parts of Upper Swabia, public prayers are still offered up after an eclipse. The appearance of three suns denotes war; they are only visible at sunrise and differ in size. The largest gains the day, practically and metaphorically. At Herbrechtingen these suns have frequently been seen, and such was the case just before Napoleon's Russian campaign. The largest sun was in the northern direction, and that is why the Russians won.

The sun is obliged to shine for a short time, at least, every Sunday, in order that the Blessed Virgin may dry her veil. Three Saturdays in the year, on which she mourns, the sun does not shine at all.

The stars also played no small part in heathen mythology. According to popular belief they are favorable or unfavorable to mankind, depending on the constellation under which each human being is born. There was a pious custom of saluting the stars before retiring to rest, or else repeating a prayer on the appearance of the evening star. Whoever points at a star puts out the eyes of an angel. The "Edda" describes the stars as fiery sparks, which floated about in the air until their places were appointed for them by the gods.

Falling stars are weighty omens, and whoever beholds one ought to repeat a prayer. In Tyrol and elsewhere, it is believed that any wish, expressed whilst a star falls, will be fulfilled; a treasure lies where it falls. The Lithuanian myth connects falling stars with the Fates. Werpeja, the spinner, begins to weave the thread of each newly-born human being in the sky, and each thread terminates in a star; when death approaches a man, his thread breaks and the star fades and falls.

A comet is prophetic and generally presages evil. The Tyrolese call it "God's

Rod," and say that its import may be learned from its color. Red signifies war and misery, but, if the light be clear and bright, it portends peace and happiness.

The Milky Way usually goes in Swabia by the name of "Jacob's Ladder," or "Heaven's Ladder." The angels still descend on the earth by it, as Jacob saw in his dream, but they are not visible to every one.

The Great Bear probably owes his name of "Wain" to Paganism. It is said that at midnight the chariot turns with a mighty rumbling. The Swabian peasantry believes that it drives to Jerusalem every night; whilst the Swiss have a superstition that if it be low in the sky bread will be cheap, if the contrary it will be dear. Grimm is of opinion that the chariot belonged to Wuotan, as being the chief of the gods, although an old Swedish chronicle attributes the Swedish name "Karl Wagen," our English "Charles Wain," to Thor; but Grimm adds that many Wuotan legends were applied to the Frankish Emperor Charles the Great. The cities of Antwerp and Groningen have the constellation of Ursa Major or Minor on their municipal seals. The small star, scarcely visible above the middle one in the pole of the chariot, has its own legend, and is called "Hans Dumken" in North Germany. It is said that he once drove our Lord, who in return promised he should go to heaven; but the man replied he would rather drive throughout eternity, and his wish was granted. Most likely this is founded on some heathen tale of Wuotan's charioteer.

Orion, as the Greeks called the belt of glittering stars, has several German names. In some parts the three stars are called the "Three Mowers," and the Rhineland name is "The Rake." The Swabians say it is Moses's staff with which he divided the Red Sea, and other names are "Jacob's Staff" and "St. Peter's Staff."

In Germany, the Pleiades are almost universally known as "The Hen," because the foremost star is supposed to resemble a hen leading her brood of chickens. There is a curious legend of the origin of these stars. Our Lord once passed a baker's shop, and perceiving a strong odor of new bread, he sent in one of his disciples to ask for a loaf. The baker refused, but his wife, who was standing a little way off with her six daughters, was more compassionate and secretly bestowed the loaf, for which good deed she

and her daughters were transferred to the firmament as seven stars. The baker was changed into a cuckoo, and the Pleiades are always visible as long as the cuckoo calls in the spring.

The appearance of the rainbow in the sky gave rise to many mythological conceptions. The "Edda" describes it as the heavenly bridge Bifrost, traversed by the gods. It is the best of all bridges, and is strongly constructed of three colors; nevertheless when the end of the world comes, it will break down while the sons of Muspell are driving over it. Its end reaches to Himinbiorg, the abode of Heimdall, and Heimdallr guards it against the giants, lest they should penetrate into heaven.

According to the popular belief, the extremities of a rainbow always touch streams, whence it draws water, by means of two large golden dishes. That is why it rains for three days after the appearance of a rainbow, because the water must fall again on the earth. Whoever arrives at the right moment at the spot where the rainbow is drinking, can take possession of the golden dish, which reflects all the colors of the rainbow; but if nobody is there the dishes are again drawn up into the clouds. Some say that the rainbow always lets a dish fall. This once happened at Reutlingen, in Swabia. It broke in several pieces, but the finder received a hundred gulden for it. At Tübingen, people used to run to the end of the rainbow, which appeared to be resting over the Neckar or the Steinlach, to secure the golden dish. Usually it is considered wrong to sell the dish, which ought to be kept as an heirloom in the family, for it brings good luck. A shepherd in the Swabian Alp once found such a dish, and he never afterward lost a sheep. An unfortunate native of Heubach, who sold the treasure at a high price, was struck dumb on the spot. Small round gold coins, marked with a cross or star, are frequently found in Swabia, and the peasants declare that these were manufactured from the rainbow dishes by the Romans when they invaded Germany. In the Black Forest, the rainbow uses a golden goblet, which is afterwards dropped. A shoe thrown into a rainbow comes back filled with gold. The Servians have a theory that passing beneath a rainbow changes the sex,—men become women, and *vice versa*.

When a double rainbow is seen, Swabian

peasants say that the Devil would like to imitate the rainbow, but he cannot succeed. The Esthonians call the rainbow "The Thunder-god's Sickle."

A theory existed in the Middle Ages, that the rainbow would cease to appear a certain number of years before the Last Judgment; and Hugo von Trimberg, in an old German poem, mentions forty years as the prescribed time: but this supposition is not even alluded to in any ecclesiastical works.

The Lithuanians have a quaint legend respecting the rainbow. When their chief god, Pramzimas, was looking out of the window, and beheld the whole earth full of wars and wickedness, he despatched two giants, named Wandu and Wejas (Water and Wind), to the sinful world, who destroyed everything for twenty days and twenty nights. While engaged in eating heavenly nuts, Pramzimas gazed on the

scene of desolation below, and he threw down a nutshell, which fell on the summit of the highest mountain, where a few men and women and some animals had fled for refuge. All got into the nutshell, which floated on the waves of the now universal flood. The god then looked on the earth for the third time. He allayed the tempest, and bade the waters subside. The human beings who had been saved all dispersed, excepting a few couples who remained in that part, and became the ancestors of the Lithuanians in the following manner: As old age crept upon them, they sorrowed greatly at their probable extinction; so, in order to comfort them, Pramzimas sent the rainbow, who advised them to leap over the bones of the earth. Nine times did they perform this feat, and thence sprang nine couples, males and females, from whom the nine Lithuanian tribes are descended.

THE MOORHOUSE TRAGEDY.

BY JANE G. AUSTIN.

It stood alone, the gray, grim old house, all in a dead level of plain, across which it gazed mournfully with dim, unshuttered eyes. That this prospect should be the more fairly visible, the architect of this dreary mansion had elevated it upon a terrace, or rather upon three low ones, and these had once been flower-beds, now, however, differing little from the surrounding moor.

"A desolate place enough, and well fitting to my desolate heart and future life," thought I, still standing on the broken steps, the closed door at my back.

"Shall I take off the horses, Miss Rosalind?" asked Paul, doubtfully, after waiting some moments for the result of my reply.

"Yes, Paul. I shall remain here, certainly. But we should get in and be settling ourselves before dark. The key,—where is it?"

"Mrs. Esther has it, miss."

"And she? Esther! Esther! where are you?"

My nurse came slowly round the corner of the house, putting away her handkerchief. I knew she had been crying, for me and the dismal life that lay before me, but my heart was hard as adamant, turned to stone with its own crushing sorrow, and I only said coldly,—

"Come, Esther, I am waiting. Where is the key?"

"Yes, Miss Rosalind. Here it is."

And from the bag upon her arm the woman drew out a great rusty prison-looking key. Struck with this resemblance, I added bitterly,—

"Here, Paul, you shall be turnkey. Show us to our cells, without delay."

"You are right, miss," said my old servant, answering my thought. "It is more like a jail than a gentleman's house."

With a dismal shriek the bolt yielded to the strong persuasion of Paul's still powerful arm, and the key turned, but still the door did not yield until the man applied his sturdy shoulder and knee, raising at the same time the ponderous iron latch.

It seemed as if, in years of mouldering repose, the decaying wood had re-united its dissevered fibres, until door and casing had grown together in ghastly mimicry of the summer time, when, full of sap and vigor, they had joined their strength to hold high the honored head of their parent oak.

But nature still must yield to man; and with a rending sound, a harsh groan, the knitted fibres were once more torn asunder, the door swung slowly open, and I crossed the threshold of my future home and stood within the hall.

It was not cheerful. I do not think, had I been filled with joy as I was with gloom, possessed with love and life as I was with wrath and despair, that I could have repressed a shudder. As it was, I sank involuntarily upon my knees, and, with outstretched arms, whispered, —

"Spirits of my fathers haunting these crumbling walls, welcome home your child, who henceforth belongs to you alone!"

And down the unseen corridors, the dim stair-cases, and through the low-browed halls, came a sighing moan. The house and its inmates answered me.

"O Miss Rosalind, my poor, heart-broken darling!" exclaimed my old nurse, trying to raise me in her arms. "Don't kneel there! don't look so wild! don't go any farther into this dreadful old house! Come, dearie, Paul has not yet unharnessed the horses; let us return to Moortown before it grows quite dark. You will die or go mad here, darling."

"And if I should, nurse?"

"Now, now, my pet!" expostulated old Esther just as she used when I was a little, willful child, some eighteen years before. "Don't talk that way, now don't!"

"Well, then, nurse, let us look through the house," said I with an attempt at cheerfulness; and rising from the old arm-chair where Esther had placed me, I threw a scrutinizing glance about me.

In front lay the hall, long, wide, low-browed, paved with tiles. From its midst rose a staircase, massive, with curiously carved balusters, and a broad landing half way up, where, dividing, two lighter flights

of stairs led to the side-corridors. Beneath this landing, two low, round arches gave entrance to the wings of the rambling old house. At my right hand and at my left stood open doors, but the rooms within lay in Egyptian darkness.

"Undo these shutters, nurse, and let us see our future habitation."

Esther advanced somewhat timorously into the mystery I had bidden her explore, and I mechanically followed her.

I heard her fumbling at the bar, and then a confused flapping sound, followed by the dash of something living, that, as all life does when left to instinct, made for the light, but finding me in its path, fell upon my head and burrowed in my loosened hair.

"Off, fiend!" screamed I, grasping at it with some vague idea that my black Fate had at last assumed a tangible form in this ghostly old house, and had seized me in a final grasp.

But old Esther ran to my assistance, and with secret shame I saw that it was only a great bat that had thus routed my vaunted courage. Still, I obeyed my nurse's suggestion, and went out upon the broken granite steps, between two of which a sturdy young oak had forced its way and struggled up toward heaven, distorted but triumphant.

"Yes," said I, nodding to it in a friendly way, "you have removed mountains by your faith, and undisturbed you shall hold your reward, even if my steps are thereby somewhat disturbed."

The oakling nodded a rustling reply, and with a somewhat lighter heart I re-entered the house. The opened shutters at last admitted the gray November gloaming, and by it I saw a large, vaulted apartment, the floor covered with such remnants of a rich carpet as had been spared by mildew, moths, and mice. The furniture was in heavy ebony frames, the embroidered seats and backs of the chairs as tarnished as the carpet, the marble tables loaded with dust, and various other articles of rich but cumbrous plenishing all in a condition of decay and dilapidation.

My eye wandered carelessly over all until it fell upon a little graceful workstand with a low chair beside it, and a piece of unfinished embroidery upon it. Above it hung the picture of a lovely young girl, handsome, joyous, and proud.

At once the desolation of the place cen-

tred to me about this one spot, for here, while the house was yet alive, had evidently been the dwelling of its most cherished hopes. I looked inquiringly at Esther.

"Yes, dear bairn," said the old woman tremulously, "it is your mother. Here she used to sit with her embroidery or her book, as peaceful as a bird upon its nest, and as cheerful, till" —

"Hush, Esther!" exclaimed I quickly, for I was not yet ready to hear her speak of what came after. "Come, let us go upstairs. I must select my chamber."

I passed quickly up the stairs, unconsciously noting as I went the fanciful arabesque pattern inlaid with colored woods upon each step, and so reached the wide landing. I paused a moment and turned to the left.

"The sunniest rooms are on the other side of the house, Miss Rosalind," said Esther, hurriedly, as she stopped upon the landing.

"I don't care for sunny rooms. The brightest sunshine comes from within," returned I, recklessly, as I sprang up the stairs.

Arrived in the bronzed-railed gallery surrounding the upper hall, I passed quickly along until I reached a dim corridor opening upon the gallery at right angles, and leading, apparently, to the less stately apartments of the eastern wing. Down this corridor I hastened, drawn on by a blind instinct, until I paused before a door closing its farther end. I laid my hand upon the latch.

"We will look in here first," I said.

"Oh, no! for the love of Heaven, not here, dear bairn! You must not go in here!" cried Esther, hastening after me and trying to remove my fingers from the lock.

"But why not?" persisted I. "Why not here? Perhaps I shall like to make this room my own. At any rate, I will see it."

"No, no!" reiterated my nurse, "not this, of all the rooms in this fearful house. It is — it is the 'Chamber to the East.'"

"The Chamber to the East," repeated I slowly, while a dull chill went curdling through my veins. But I shook it off, and cried in wild bravado, "And what of that? What is there so fearful in this chamber to the east, that I must not even look within? What guilty secret does it hold, what ghost haunts its space, what blood stains its

floor, to thus give it the pre-eminence of horror in this horror-full old house?"

"She knows, — she knows it all!" murmured Esther hoarsely; and as her hand dropped nervelessly from mine, I lifted the latch and entered.

It was a small, octagonal chamber, conforming to the shape of the tower terminating the wing. Opposite the door, and looking to the east, was a great bay-window, and in it stood a little table with flower-pots upon it. The plants had long since died, decayed, returned to dust, and over the earth a coat of thin green mould had grown to grass their graves. It was a cheerful idea, like having a toy churchyard in one's boudoir. Some articles of female apparel lay scattered upon the chairs and floor. The little rosewood bedstead was bare of beds and coverings, and the whole room was in a condition of disarray and confusion betokening a hasty desertion. Glancing eagerly around, I suddenly perceived a great dark stain, lying partly upon the little Persian carpet, partly upon the oaken floor. I looked steadily upon it, and well did I know what brought it there.

I turned to the pale and trembling woman who with clasped hands and streaming eyes stood anxiously regarding me.

"This was my mother's room, Esther," said I calmly. "Now sit down here, and tell me her story."

"Not now! oh, not now! You are half-crazed already, and if you should hear" —

"Nay, Esther, but I *will* hear it, — here, and now. You have but to obey, and are not responsible for the consequences. Sit down, I say, and tell me my mother's story."

Perhaps my eyes and voice had something maniacal about them. At any rate, my nurse made no farther resistance to my will, but, seating herself tremblingly on the edge of the bedstead, began at once.

"I nursed her at my breast, Miss Rosalind, for her mother died when she was born, and her father trusted me as the wife of a faithful servant who had come with him from England. He cared for her, but never loved her. At first he looked on her as the cause of her mother's death, and later on he saw that she feared and avoided him.

"I used to try to teach her better, but she was ever a shy and timid child, and never could bring herself to show the free-

dom and confidence with her father that he loved so much in you. Remember, Miss Rosalind, whatever I may tell you, remember that your grandfather always loved and was kind to you."

"Yes, yes, go on!" I murmured impatiently.

"We traveled a good deal, and lived a while at the grand house in Richmond, where you have always lived, but after a while your grandfather, who mostly hated everybody, left the world altogether and came to this old house that his father had built at great cost, bringing all the finishings and ornamental work from England. But your grandfather never liked the place, and his English wife never came to it at all. Now, however, it suited him better than a more cheerful home, and he told Andrew (my husband, I mean, dearie), the first morning after he came, that he would end his days there.

"It seemed dull enough to us servants, for we did n't half fill the house, and there never was any company. But little Miss *Adelais* never found any place dull or gloomy, but would sit whole hours dreaming and whispering to herself, not caring for other company.

"At last she grew a great girl, and after much thought I ventured to remind my master that his daughter was growing to be a woman without any of the knowledge befitting her condition. For, although I would gladly have taught her, I was sadly ignorant myself.

"Colonel Howard looked at me gloomily for a moment, and then asked his daughter's age. I told him she was fifteen. He waved his hand, saying, 'That will do, Esther,' and I was glad to leave the room.

"The next day your grandfather wrote to a friend of his at the North, and I suppose asked him merely to send him a teacher for his daughter without mentioning whether it was to be male or female. At any rate, he seemed very much astonished when one day a young gentleman arrived with a letter for him from his *Northern friend*, and so come up with it to the nursery to tell me.

"*'That stupid fellow has sent me a hoble-de-hoy from college to teach the child instead of a girl as I expected, but I don't know that it won't answer as well, unless, indeed, the little coward is afraid of him as she is of me. You must talk to her, Es-*

ther, and tell her she is not to run away and hide when he speaks to her, but try to learn her a-b-abs like a good child, that is if the boy knows enough to teach them to her.'

"He laughed in his scornful way, and went out leaving me to repeat what he had said to my pet when she came in from her walk.

"The next day my master again appeared in the nursery, now to be the schoolroom, and this time he was accompanied by Mr. Gray, the new tutor.

"He was a handsome and a kind-spoken young gentleman, but he had not the spirit and temper that I love to see in a man. He would blush or turn pale when the colonel made his rough remarks, as he often did, just to try him it seemed to me; and if the young man had made some answer back, or showed that he was angry, he would have had an easier time of it, for my master loved courage better than anything, except his own old family. So after a while Mr. Gray got to avoiding his employer all that he could, and often whole days would pass without their meeting, for my master, who was buried in his books, would have his meals brought to him in the library, and pass his evenings there, and I promise you Mr. Gray was none too fond of interrupting him."

The old woman paused with a melancholy sigh, and I, who knew what was to come, moaned impatiently, —

"Go on! go on!"

"Never mind the rest tonight, my pet," pleaded Esther, coming toward me and putting her arms about me. "It is a sad, sad tale, and night is shutting in."

"Go on! go on!" reiterated I, pushing the dear old woman from me; and resuming her seat, she continued softly.

"The colonel did not like Mr. Gray, but Miss *Adelais* liked no one better. They were always together at their lessons, or poring over books of poetry and stories. Then, when the warm weather came, he must teach her about flowers, and then about rocks, and they must be off to the woods for specimens as they called them; or they would set out for a ride on horseback, and be gone hours and hours.

"I did not somehow like all this, especially when I found that my darling was growing shy of her old nurse, and would look frightened and steal away when I tried

to talk with her about being more at home. Still I did not like to speak out, for she had always seemed so much of a child and so ignorant of evil, that I dreaded lest I might open her eyes to feelings that perhaps she had never suspected. Sometimes I wished my master could know my mind, but I never should have thought of speaking to him unless I had been sure of what I only suspected, for your grandfather's anger was a fearful thing to see.

"At last, one day Miss Adalais came to me and said that she wanted to go herself to Richmond to buy some trinkets, and bid me ask her father to let her go with me, and the tutor to take care of us. I went and did my message, all but mentioning the escort my young mistress had chosen, for I hoped the colonel would say he was going himself; but instead, he said directly, —

"Go with her, Esther, by all means. It will be an era in her life to buy a doll for herself instead of having it sent to order. And Mr. Gray shall go too. He will not only protect you on the journey, but is very competent to help Adalais in her errand."

"My poor master! he knew not what he was saying.

"The next day we set out. It is about a hundred miles, and we were in no hurry, so it was nearly a week before we reached the city. We went to our own house that was left in charge of an old man-servant, and had our meals from the hotel hard by. We were only to stay one night, and all the first day Miss Adalais was around in the shops with me, while Mr. Gray went upon his own business.

"I was very tired at night, and I suppose slept unusually sound, for when I awoke in the morning (I had a bed in Miss Adalais's chamber) she was gone.

"I got up, feeling terribly frightened and bewildered, dressed myself, and would have gone to look for her could I have guessed which way to go. But while I was still running up and down the house, and peeping from every window that I came to, I heard the hall door open, and presently my young mistress came very softly up the stairs and went into her own room. I followed her in, and looked the question I did not like to ask. She blushed rosy red, and turned away to the window.

"Good-morning, Miss Adalais," said I, then.

"Good-morning, nurse," answered she,

without looking round. 'I have been out for a little walk.'

"Did you go alone, Miss Adalais?" asked I quietly.

"No, that would not be proper in a strange place like this. My tutor went with me."

"Her voice, soft as it was, had a touch of her father's tone in it, and I said no more; but although I never heard the story of my darling's walk that morning, I believe, and hope as I hope for salvation, that she went to be married to Mr. Gray. Not that I thought so then. If I had suspected such a thing, I should have been out of my wits with grief and dismay. I thought then that it was only like the rides and walks at home that they had been always going after.

"We started for home that day, and thankful was I to have Miss Adalais again under her father's roof, although it was really not so different to her from what a stranger's might have been.

"After this, things went on pretty much in the same way, except that my nursing grew more and more away from me, and when she was not out with her tutor liked best to stay alone here in this chamber, that had been her own ever since she was ten years old. Before that, it had always been called the Chamber to the East; and now it sometimes went by that name, sometimes as Miss Adalais's room.

"I had always gone in and out here as I did while my pet was a little child till after that journey to Richmond; but after that I often found the door locked, and my mistress would not answer if I spoke. When this had happened two or three times, I avoided going except to dress and undress her, and then I always knocked, like any of the other servants. But after a time she would not let me help her at all about her toilet, or let me in night and morning; and my heart was very sore, for I saw that the child I had nursed at my breast, and loved like my own dead baby, had lost her love and trust in me. She hid away from me all she could, and blushed if even I looked steadfastly at her.

"So closed the first year of Mr. Gray's life with us, and I hoped he was to go away; but nothing was said about it, and we began the second year with November. But, oh, dear child! oh, my poor pet! why would you come here? Why would you force this story from me tonight, of all nights in

the year, — this dreary fifteenth of November?"

She paused, choked with her sobs; but my imperious gesture, and hoarse whisper of "Go on! go on!" forced her to dry her eyes; and she continued.

"It was the night of the fifteenth of November, twenty-two years ago, and I had gone to my own bed in the chamber directly over this after-offering to undress Miss Adelia, who would not, however, open the door for me. I was in bed, but not asleep, — for in truth I was crying at the way my child had taken to treating me, — when I heard my master come quickly up the stairs, and pass down the corridor leading to the Chamber to the East. I jumped out of bed, and ran to the stair-head to listen. He lifted the latch. The door was fastened; but the lock that was strong enough to keep out the friend who would have warned and saved her gave way at once before the foot of the angry colonel.

"The door flew open, and then I heard my darling's screams, and wild prayer for mercy, a few words spoken in my master's deepest, harshest tones, and, O me! I heard the voice of Mr. Gray, though I know not what he said.

"I ran down quickly, for I feared the worst from my master's unbridled passion. But, O child! the worst had come even in the minute I was running down the stairs and along the passage. I stood in the door, struck back with horror, and saw — oh the fearful sight! There, upon the floor, — there, where the dark stain of his blood will show till the boards crumble to dust, — there lay the poor boy on his face, dead; already dead. Crouching beside him, and holding one of his hands in both of hers, was my poor darling, my wee, frightened bairnie, her long hair streaming down over the night-dress, already dabbled with his blood, her white face pinched with horror, her wild eyes glancing quick and strange from her dead lover to the father who stood before her, cold and stern, his naked sword in his hand, with the red blood dripping drop by drop from its point to the floor.

"As I looked, the poor child stooped and kissed the hand she held, and murmured some fond words.

"The colonel made a step forward, and so did I, for he should not have touched her then, — no, not while I had life and strength to shelter her; but she did not notice either

of us. Her hand had touched the floor, and was wet in the warm blood lying there; and now she held up the pretty fingers before her face, and stared at them curiously. Presently, looking down, she saw the pool where they had been wetted, and with a little laugh she began to paddle and play in it as a baby would. It was too fearful. I ran forward, and with my arms about her would have drawn her away; but she would not come. Struggling and moaning, but without a word, she escaped from me, and would have gone back to her horrid play; but I said to my master, in a tone such as he had never heard from me before, —

"Will you take her away? Her mind is gone already; and her life will follow in another hour like this."

"He stooped, without a word, raised her in his strong arms (I promise you the poor birdie did not struggle then), and carried her to another room. Then I placed her in bed, and, sitting down beside her, began to smooth her hair, and sing very silly songs to her, as I used when she was a child. And presently the bright eyes grew heavy, the lids shut down, and she slept as sweetly as a baby might. Meantime, the colonel went up to my room, and called my husband.

"Andrew," said he, "I have work for you to do. Come and prove how much you value your master's friendship."

"Andrew dressed himself, all in a maze, and followed the colonel, who led him to this room, and, pointing to it, said, —

"There is a man whom I have killed, — your wife will tell you why. Carry him out, and bury him directly under this window."

"My husband was a man of but few words, and he believed in his master next to his God. So he took the body on his shoulder, without a single question, carried it out, and made the grave at the foot of the poplar whose branches keep scraping across the window as I talk. I suppose the poor lad used to reach the window by climbing up its branches. Oh, I hope, I hope it was to be married that they stole away that morning!

"The next day my master, my young mistress, and I, set out upon a journey, leaving Andrew to send away the few servants — who were all of them stupid negroes, and suspected nothing — to my master's plantation in Maryland, and then to lock up the house.

"Don't stir or pack anything," said my master; "just lock the door, and leave all to rot together."

"We obeyed him, except that I tried to wash away the spot upon the floor of the Chamber to the East. But that is a spot, Miss Rosalind, that water will never cleanse or fade."

"And then?" I whispered, as Esther paused solemnly.

"And then we traveled to the city, where my master went directly to his lawyer, and told the whole story. There was an examination before a judge, I believe, but the colonel never was brought to trial. I never knew much about this part of it, for everything was kept as quiet as possible; and the few people who ever heard of it at all supposed the tutor was killed in a duel, after some quarrel with the colonel, and no more was thought about it. Then we went to Cuba, where you were born, my pretty, a few months after our arrival."

"Oh, weary, weary day!" I moaned.

"Don't, my pet! now don't go on like that, unless you would kill your poor old nurse. Whist, now, bairnie, and I will tell you more about your poor girl-mother."

"Yes: tell me more. Did she love me? was she pleased?"

"Dear child, she never knew you: never spoke a single word, never cried a single tear, from the moment she sat upon the floor of her chamber dabbling her fingers in her lover's blood. She laughed sometimes; but such a laugh! Hours and hours she would sit crouching upon the floor, paddling and spitting with her little hands upon the carpet, and anon looking up in my face to laugh. O Miss Rosalind! God grant you may never see so sad a sight. Those few months made of me an old woman before I had passed my prime."

"At last she was sick, and you were born; and then, thank God, she died. For I am sure that the baby I nursed, and the fair young girl I loved so well, is as pure an angel now as waits beside his throne."

"When all was over, her father came, and looked long and earnestly upon the sweet, still face, and at last he slowly stooped and kissed her brow. But it was a kiss that only said that in the grave all sins must be forgiven; and if she could have opened her loving eyes to thank him, he would have wiped away the kiss if it had taken the skin with it."

"Then he bade me find a nurse for you, and brought you home as the child of his son, who had died in Cuba the year before."

"We went directly to our Maryland plantation, and there was no one there to notice or care that the child of Henry Howard, who had lain a year in his grave, was but a few weeks old."

"When you were old enough you were sent to a boarding-school" —

"Yes, nurse: I know about myself. Now go away, please, and leave me, — quick."

I clenched my teeth as I spoke, and twisted my cold hands within each other until the bones started from their sockets; for I could hardly, even so, keep down the passion of despair that swelled my heart.

"Never, never, Miss Rosalind," replied my old nurse passionately. "I never will leave you alone in this chamber, feeling as you feel, and knowing what you now know. Come down with me, dearie, and let me get you some tea."

"Esther, dear old nursie, don't cross me now. When did you ever refuse me anything that you could give me? And never did I in all my life want anything so much as I now want to be alone."

"Nay, my pet," began the old woman coaxingly; but I saw that she was yielding, and cried impetuously, —

"I will have it so, Esther: say no more. You may, if you choose, kindle a fire, and put clothing on the bed; but, whether you do or not, I shall stay tonight in this chamber, and alone."

The dear old woman did not attempt further opposition, but got up and went out, wringing her hands, and crying as if her heart would break.

For me, I went to the recessed window, — that window last opened to admit my mother's lover, or husband, — and gazed with dry, hot eyes out into the clashing limbs of the withered tree at whose foot lay my father's murdered body. So stood I, motionless, while the nurse brought fuel, and kindled a fire upon the forlorn hearth, prepared the bed, and set out various little articles of comfort and luxury, hoping — as fond hearts will — to soothe, by pampering the body, a soul wounded beyond the hope of any help save God's. Then she came and laid a mutely eloquent hand upon my arm; but I turned sharply, and, taking her hand in mine, led her to the door, and with a kiss upon her forehead put her gently out,

and would have fastened the door behind her; but the lock was broken. Broken when? and how? Oh, that one slight but unlooked-for confirmation of my nurse's tale reached my heart with a keen sting that the crushing whole had failed to carry!

I secured the door with a button affixed to the casing, but probably not used upon that fatal night; and then I at last dared to give way to the passion that was tearing at my heart.

I cannot tell, I would not if I could, what passed in the next hours. The utter abandonment of a human soul is not a sight for human eyes. Enough that the angels saw it, and trembled as they wept. Let me rather narrate, as briefly as I may, the incidents that led to my presence in this lonely and ill-omened house.

When I came home from the school where my girlhood passed in peaceful monotony, I found myself the mistress of my grandfather's house, and soon the darling of his heart; for I loved him dearly, and never was afraid. I saw a great deal of company, was flattered and admired, and had more than one suitor. But from the first I loved Maurice Burton, although for months I was as cold as marble to him, until, fearing all, hoping nothing, he told me of his love.

I pass over the happy days that followed. We were to have soon been married, when one morning my grandfather, the kind promoter and sympathizer in our happiness, was found dead in his bed, and I became the orphan heiress of his wealth.

Maurice urged an immediate marriage; but I refused to abate a day of my year of mourning, and, inviting a staid old relative to come and remain with me, I resigned myself to months of patient retirement, and preparation for the happy event that should terminate it.

Upon this peaceful and monotonous calm fell one day a terrible interruption, a crushing blow. I received a letter—stay, I will give it. Thus it ran:—

“Do you know, fair, proud one,—whose feet touch the earth as if they spurned it, whose haughty eyes wander over your fellow-men as if you saw them not,—do you know that the mark of shame was branded upon that white brow before ever you were born? Do you know that your father was a poor tutor, who repaid his benefactor's tolerance with the rankest treachery and in-

gratitude? That your mother,—well, perhaps you never heard the name that the world would give to your mother. Do you know that your grandfather, roused at last to the knowledge of his shame, killed the villain who had injured him, even in the arms of the poor fool he had betrayed? and that she, in the shock of that moment, lost the little wit she ever owned, and remained from that moment to the moment of your birth and her death a moping, mowing idiot? Did you know that in one of your stately mansions is an apartment known as the ‘Chamber to the East’? and that upon its floor is a deep-red stain,—the stain of your father's blood? Would you read all this, given in the dry detail of an official examination, as I have done? Ah! your grandfather made sure that the papers were destroyed long years ago; but he did not know that one had read them first, who now profits by the knowledge to strike straight and deep at the heart of the haughty girl who has slighted him more than once. For all this that you know, my fair one, Maurice Burton also knows; and he has been furnished with proofs, as well as assertions. Discuss the history together. It will vary the monotony of lovers' talk.”

Such was the letter. Whence it came, I neither knew nor cared. The blow had struck home, and the hand that dealt it was unheeded.

I waited for Maurice that evening with a fierce impatience. I received him alone, and my eyes devoured the meaning of his face. It was very pale, but calm. The conflict was over,—love had conquered pride. From then till the day of his death he never would have alluded to the miserable secret. But no such reticence was mine. I spoke briefly, coldly:—

“Maurice, you have received a letter to-day. Did it contain proofs, as well as assertions?”

“Dearest”—

“No: answer me, please, Were there proofs?”

“I believe so—I do not know—do not care. Why urge such questions?”

“Because I must have the truth. Tell me, if indeed you love me, is this story true?”

“What matter, Rosalind? True, or false, it cannot soil you, my own pure angel.”

“And you can torture me thus? Answer

me, for the love of God! is this story true, or false?"

"I fear it is true, darling; but" —

"Nay: let me go. I am ill," moaned I, rushing from the room to lock myself into my chamber.

I did not sleep that night; but when I was calm enough to think I planned my future life. My nurse had spoken sometimes, in our long, gloaming talks, of a lonely old place belonging to my grandfather, far from town or village, called Moorhouse: thither I resolved to go.

The next day I set my affairs in order, dismissed the ancient cousin, — for a while, as I told her; forever, as I thought, — discharged my servants, who were hired (for my grandfather had manumitted all his slaves at his death), and after nightfall I left the city with Esther, my faithful nurse, and Paul, the middle-aged man-servant who had taken Andrew's place about my grandfather, on the death of his favorite old valet.

Maurice Burton had haunted the house all that day; but I would neither see him nor answer his messages or billets. I knew his brave and noble heart so well that I did not for a moment doubt his love; but I doubted myself. I must wait a while in solitude to see what new nature was to develop out of the chaos into which this great shock had cast my former self. Besides, I hardly cared for him then. Grief, shame, and rage so possessed my heart that love fled affrighted from their furious battle-field. All my wish was to be alone, to escape from every one.

So we came to Moorhouse, and to the black midnight that found me pacing that ghostly Chamber to the East, worn out, spent with the emotion that for hours I had indulged in freest utterance.

The fire that Esther had piled high upon the mouldy hearth had gone down, and I had not replenished it; but I did not need its light, for the moon threw a flood of pallid beams through the wide panes of the bay-window, and made the little room almost as bright as day.

Quite exhausted, at length, with the violence of my emotions, I wrapped myself in my thick traveling-shawl, and, throwing myself upon the bed, fell into a heavy sleep. For it is one of the blessings of youth that our passions rage until they are spent, and give us time to rest. Later in life grief vis-

its us less acutely; but it makes our hearts its home, brooding remorselessly over every moment, and crying to sleep, as to joy, "Away! this hour is mine!"

So I slept; but awakened presently with a dull chill creeping through my veins, a sick feeling of terror causing the hair to rise upon my head, the heart to shudder in my breast. At the same time a vague consciousness of some great sorrow in the air, my own, yet not my own, came over me. Some one seemed sobbing at my side, and yet my strained ear failed to catch the faintest sound. Slowly, and with a great effort, I opened my eyes, and looked out into the room. The moon rising higher in the heavens threw less light into the apartment than when I went to sleep; but there was still sufficient to distinctly show me every feature in the face of her who had broken my slumbers with the oppressive consciousness of her grief.

She was a fair young girl, slight and graceful, and bore the same resemblance to her picture hanging over the work-table that the wan image in a darksome pool bears to the living face hanging over it. She was clad in a long night-dress, with her fair hair flowing over it, and she hovered — wringing her hands, and sobbing in that piteous, inaudible way — over the dark stain discoloring the floor and carpet.

At first she did not notice me; and after a moment I softly raised myself upon my elbow, that I might see more distinctly. Then she slowly turned, and, putting back the hair from her forehead, fixed on me the far-away, solemn gaze of those still eyes. I essayed to speak; but no sound came from my dry lips and parched throat, and, turning from me, the form moved in an irregular, wavy manner — not touching the floor, but floating just above it — to a great black case of drawers standing in a recess opposite the window. The brass ornaments gleamed out in the moonlight that touched them here and there, and I perceived that the drawers were very wide and deep, and without effort or sound the shadowy form removed the lowest and heaviest one, and from the cavity behind it took a folded paper. This she eagerly pressed to her heart and lips, glancing fearfully about as she did so, and then, wavering across the room to my bedside, she extended it to me with a piteous gesture of entreaty. Eagerly I extended my hand to grasp it; but the fin-

gers closed on empty space. With a thrill of nervous horror I made a convulsive effort to seize both the paper and the hand that held it; but again my fingers passed unresisting through the appearance both of paper and of gleaming flesh.

With a wild laugh I sank back upon my pillow, and for the first time in my life fainted quite away.

When I recovered consciousness, the gay sunshine filled my room instead of the oblique rays of the waning moon, and for a moments I lay bewildered with my novel surroundings and thrilling memories. Then as the strange scene of the past night rose clearly before my eyes, I sprang impetuously from the bed, ran to the grim old secretary, and seizing the brass handles of the lower drawer tried to pull it forward. But it was fast locked!

Running to the door, and turning the button, I was hastening from the room, but started back at the sight of my poor old Esther stretched upon the bare floor, her head resting on her bent arm, and sound asleep. The faithful creature had remained close to the door from the moment I so rudely closed it in her face. Rousing her, I reproached her gently for thus exposing herself in my behalf, and then asked for the keys of the secretary.

"But, Miss Rosalind, what can you want there?" asked Esther, in some surprise. "It is the place where my dear darling used to keep her clothes and little trinkets. It is not a very pretty thing for a young lady's use; but she found it in the old lumber-room, and fancied to have it brought down here. It is empty now, or near it, for that weary morning when we went away I put up all her clothes, and I suppose locked the empty drawers without thinking."

"But the key: is it lost?" I asked impatiently.

"I don't know, dearie, what has become of it, I'm sure. Stay: when I put away Miss Adalais's things, I used to leave the key on this little ledge, and here it is, sure enough; but there's nothing in the old drawers."

Long before the completion of the sentence I had seized the rusty key, and fitted it to the lock. It turned harshly, and grasping the handles I at last succeeded in pulling out the drawer, whose ponderous weight and creaking movement recalled to my mind with a new thrill of horror the

noiseless ease with which I had seen it moved by that wan mourner of the previous night.

Was it but a dream? or had the spirit of my dead mother indeed visited me, and by some subtle power impressed upon my mind the image of the opening drawer, the concealed paper, so vividly that I deemed them realities?

This question I often asked myself in later days, but not as I dragged the great drawer out upon the floor, and stooped to look into the dusty cavity behind it.

And there it lay! a yellow, mouldering paper, that, as I grasped it, separated from the wood with a tearing sound, as if time and mildew had connected them by a thousand minute fibres. Evidently it had not been stirred for years.

With an eager cry I opened out the folded paper, and from it dropped a little tarnished ring, that, rolling swiftly across the floor, paused and fell just where the dark stain of the faded carpet met that of the oaken floor.

I screamed with nervous horror at the contact, and ran to pick it up; but Esther seized my arm, exclaiming, in the broad, Scotch accent of her youth, seldom perceptible now unless she was agitated, —

"*Dinna touch the bluid, bairn! Dinna touch your father's bluid! It's uncanny; it's an ill freit!*"

"Pick it up yourself, then, nurse. It is my mother's wedding-ring: I must have it for my own."

Esther cautiously obeyed me; but as she extended her hand to place the ring in mine, it fell again, and this time ran swift and glittering to a wide crack in the floor, where it suddenly disappeared.

"Let it go," cried I. "It is her own, and she does not wish that another finger should wear it. Look rather at this. O Esther! it is the marriage certificate of my father and mother. They were innocent; and I may yet be the wife of an honest man!"

Speaking these words, and falling on the breast of my faithful old friend, I wept at last, wept away the tears that had lain hot and heavy on my brain ever since I had read those maddening taunts and words of shame. Those tears, I verily believe, saved my reason, or my life.

That same morning we left Moorhouse, never to return. There it stands still, alone and gray in its desolation, the dim old mau-

soleum of my mother's youth and love and life. Perhaps she wanders there even now in the ghastly moonlight, wringing her poor wan hands and sobbing over the blood that before her very eyes drained the heart of that young husband whom she had loved so passionately.

My first confidant on reaching home was Maurice Burton, and he at once took the necessary steps for certifying the marriage

of my parents, and my birth; but, as I was married almost immediately to him, I never took my father's name, but retained that of the grandfather who had stood in the place of both parents to me.

So passed the crisis of my life; and, fearful though it was, both in experience and in memory, I now am able to remember thankfully my night in the Chamber to the East.

THE MUTINY ON THE JUPITER

BY W. H. MACY.

ARCHELAUS BOWEN, who was our chief mate in the *Tamerlaine*, used to tell this story of an adventure of his younger days, which I set down as nearly as possible in his own words.

When I was a happy rollicking young fellow of twenty, I found myself adrift in the port of Buenos Ayres, by reason of the vessel in which I went out from home having been sold to those patriotic heroes out there, to be converted into a privateer. I had no desire to serve under any kind of patriotic flag except that of my own country, though good inducements were offered. There were no American vessels shipping hands at the time, so I accepted an offer as able seaman in the English brig *Jupiter*, bound to Liverpool, and took my traps on board the same day, as her cargo was completed, and she was to take her anchor the next morning. The *Jupiter* was a large clumsy square-rigged brig, with everything about her in the old-fashioned style, and altogether very different from the trim saucy half-clipper, from which I had so lately been discharged.

We mustered eight men in the fore-castle, pretty well mixed as to nationality, two mates, captain and steward, making twelve souls on board.

The brig was commanded by a smart young Englishman named Knapp, and this was his first command, for he had come out from Liverpool as mate of the vessel and the captain had died of yellow fever. I found the vessel a dull sailer, but tight and strong, and as the treatment was good

enough on board, and the captain and I were mutually pleased with each other, there was nothing to complain of.

But I soon conceived a dislike for some of my shipmates, and in particular for one Mike Maroney, a burly big-jawed Irishman who had joined at Buenos Ayres on the same day that I did. This fellow soon made his power felt, and wielded a marvellous influence over nearly all the men in the fore-castle. He was a good sailor, with more than average intelligence, and I think knew something of navigation, but the character which I felt obliged to give him after a few days' acquaintance, was that of a reckless adventurer. He was in the habit of button-holing one or another of his watchmates at night, and taking him aside from the rest, to hold long and earnest conferences, but he had but little to say either to me or to the other American, Joe Ashley, who had been my shipmate in the last vessel.

The brig's cargo consisted mainly of hides, but it had been whispered that certain mysterious little boxes which were brought on board by the captain just before we sailed, and taken down into his stateroom, contained gold and silver coin. I gave little heed to these whispers, for it was, as I thought, none of my business; but I had once heard Maroney speak very knowingly on this subject, hinting that he had seen more of these boxes than he cared to tell, and I had not failed to notice how the dark eyes of the two Spaniards Pedro and Agustín lighted up while they talked on this subject, and how they exchanged meaningful looks when they thought they were unnoticed.

We had a long passage, for we could seldom drive more than five or six knots out of the old Jupiter even with a fair breeze; but we had stretched well to the northward of the equator without anything remarkable having occurred, when one night I had occasion to go on deck during my middle watch below, and feeling a little unwell, stood leaning against the forecuttle to enjoy the fresh air, when I heard voices, in low but earnest tones, coming from behind the cook's galley, which, instead of being amidship, as usual in merchant vessels, occupied a place on the port bow. The voices were those of Mike Maroney and Pedro the elder Spaniard. I had soon heard enough to make me want to hear more, and I gathered enough within a few minutes to know that they had a serious plan for taking the brig, and if necessary, killing all the officers, to get possession of the money in the little boxes.

I now heard Mike say that he was positive about the money, for he had seen it in the consignee's office at Buenos Ayres before the packages were nailed up. In his judgment there was, at least, twenty thousand dollars in silver, but there were two little boxes, which he supposed to contain gold pieces.

"Now wouldn't that be a haul for us, Pedro," said the Irishman, coolly, "even if we did have to do a little murder to get it? I don't think you or I would mind slitting a throat or two to make ourselves rich so easily."

"Too many men to divide it," said Pedro, "make small shares, make nobody rich."

"Hark'ee!" said Maroney, speaking so low, that in my eagerness I took a step nearer the galley to catch the words which were to follow. "You and I will take care of that, Pedro. Let me have help enough to work the vessel to a place that I know at one of the Cape Verde Islands, and I would think no more of making way with these other fellows after I've done with them, than of killing the skipper and the mates. You and I will divide the plunder, Pedro, and there will be enough to make two of us independent for the rest of our days."

"Good," answered the Spaniard, "Dead men no tell tales."

"We have six men with us in the fore-castle, all but the two Yankees. I shall not trust them, for they might blow the thing before we are ready. I've got the steward

all right, so we shall have a friend in the enemy's camp."

"To-morrow night then," said Pedro, "will be the time."

"That was the time appointed, but we must not wait too long. I've got the figures from the steward, and I find the brig has made a bigger run the last two days than I expected. If we should wait for to-morrow night, she will have run past the latitude of the island where I want to go. We must strike in the morning watch—just three hours from now, for there goes four bells for two o'clock, and five must be the hour. We must pass the word round at once, and have everything ready for the sleepest hour of the morning. Don't talk any more now, but when the watch is changed, tell your crony Agustin what is expected of him, and I will look out for the rest."

Here was an alarm at short notice, indeed! As I moved away to go below, I stumbled in my excitement of mind, and just then the eyes of the stalwart Irishman, peering round the corner of the galley, rested upon me, just picking myself up. Before I could stand erect, his hand was at my throat, and a long sheath knife gleamed before my face.

"Bowen, you've been listening," he said, in a suppressed voice. "What did you hear? I'll loosen my grip to allow ye to speak, but if you raise any alarm, I'll stab you to the heart. Now, then, what did you hear?"

I had by this time decided how I should temporize with him. It was useless to deny it, I knew.

"I've heard enough to know what's in the wind," said I, as soon as my throat was free. "But why didn't you trust me in this business? If there's any money in it, you might be sure a Yankee would want a share."

"I was afraid to trust you," he said, "and I'm afraid of you now. It is your turnout wheel, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is."

"Play sick when the watch is called at eight bells, and swap tricks with Jordy the Shields man. I can trust him to go aft, but not you. Do as I tell ye, if you value your life."

"But the mate knows whose trick it is, and he never allows us to exchange without searching the matter up very closely for the reasons. Besides I think already he has

suspicious, and anything out of the regular course would only increase them, and put him more on his guard. Besides, Jordy's the very man you must look out for, and he is not to be trusted at all, you see. I know more about this matter than you think I do, Mike, although I am with you heart and soul, if there's any money to be made; there are some that you think sound who will betray you before the time comes. And especially you must look out for the Shields man."

Now all this was a tissue of falsehoods, but it was said so coolly and impressively, that it carried all the force of truth, and did not fail of its impression upon one so suspicious as Mike Maroney. He was getting nervous and uncertain whom to place confidence in; and while he stood there undecided, I followed up my advantage.

"You have missed it, Mike," I said, "in not putting your trust in me and Joe Ashley. But we are ready even now to follow you, as far as you may lead, even at this short notice; and don't forget that Ashley is a good navigator, and the very man you need after you get possession of the brig."

"I'll trust you," suddenly exclaimed Maroney, with a terrible oath. "Tell Joe Ashley when you go below, and let the tricks at the wheel all go on as usual. If the Shields man blows upon me, he'll have to do it very soon; I shall strike the blow at two bells, and he won't know it till just before that time."

"Maroney, I wish you had trusted me sooner," said I, in an injured tone.

"Well, I didn't know really who was the safest man, and indeed I don't know now; but death to any man who proves false to me, for I'll have that money if I have to make the attack alone, and kill every man on board myself. Go below, and don't talk any more, for here comes the second mate forward."

My first act was to wake Joe Ashley and give him an outline of the matter. A few whispered words between us, and we understood the parts we were to play. I lay awake in the dark and heard Mike come down, and wake the little Spaniard Agustín, who stole on deck and held a low conference with Pedro. My knowledge of the Spanish language was quite imperfect, but I was enabled to gather a part of its meaning.

When my watch was called at four o'clock I went aft, without any further talk with

Ashley, but we exchanged looks, and each read the other's intentions. Maroney sat on the windlass end as I passed, and appeared nervous and fidgety, as is often the case even with the bravest and most resolute of men when on the eve of action, and just before their blood gets fired up with the excitement of battle. The discovery that I had overheard his talk with Pedro had unsettled and disconcerted him, at the very moment when he needed all his coolness.

"Joe Ashley is all right," I whispered, in a reassuring tone, as I passed him. "He'll follow you to the death."

"Good," he answered in the same low tone. "Remember, if you play me false, I'll have your heart's blood first of all!"

"Hush! not so loud, for there's Mr. Taylor just coming on deck. Never fear for me or Joe either."

As I took the helm, Tom Atkins, the man whom I had relieved, gave me the course, and passed away into the darkness on the lee side.

The next moment the mate sauntered aft on the weather side, and leaned over to look in at the compass. "Mr. Taylor," I said, in a whisper, without moving my head, "there's danger at hand."

He looked directly in my face.

"Don't speak, sir," I continued, in the same whisper, "There's mutiny brewing, and the attack is to be made at two bells. Let me speak to Captain Knapp. Ask him not to come on deck, but to put his face up here to the binnacle light. Be careful and quiet about it, and I will explain all. The steward is in the plot."

The mate, who was a cool wary man, at once took in the whole situation, and answered me only with a nod of intelligence.

He walked carelessly to the break of the quarter-deck, and then back again, five or six times, and then took out his pipe, and knocking the old ashes from it, clapped it into his mouth, and stepped below quickly as if to light it. It was hardly a minute before he returned, and resumed his march fore and aft the short quarter-deck, puffing away vigorously.

The Jupiter's binnacle, instead of being a separate box of itself, was only the after part of the large cabin gangway, so that a man at the helm and one in the cabin could see and converse with each other.

While Mr. Taylor paced the quarter-deck and smoked his pipe, Captain Knapp had

mounted upon the cabin table, thus bringing his face close up to the binnacle compass, and he and I were engaged in a colloquy, carried on entirely in a low whisper, but involving matters of life and death to us all.

We did not waste many words, for we felt that time was precious. The second mate was already astir, and he and Captain Knapp made all haste in loading up the firearms, and making ready to give the mutineers such a reception as would make the surprise mutual.

The mate did not leave the deck, but continued his measured walk as before.

In a few minutes loaded pistols for him and also for me were passed out through the binnacle window, so that we were now four well-armed men to resist the attack of six, for the captain whispered that he and Mr. Drew had fixed the black steward so that there would be no trouble from him. He had been gagged and fastened up in his own dormitory, and there was no danger from him, unless he could break out through the broadside of the ship.

I had tampered with the half-hour glass, so as to put back for a few minutes the time of striking two bells, but now that all was in readiness, I struck the rattle and some one on the bow rang forth the two strokes loud and clear. At the same instant a dark group of men sallied in two divisions from behind the long boat and advanced quickly upon us.

"Now!" Whereupon the mate, Mr. Drew, stepped from the companion stairs out upon the deck on one side, and the captain on the other, while I letting go the wheel stepped to the side of Captain Knapp, so that two men with loaded pistols confronted three on each side. There was a discharge from each of our batteries at the same time, but it was not so effective as could have been wished.

The Shields man received the ball from Captain Knapp's pistol and fell dead in his tracks, while my bullet extorted a yell from the little Spaniard Agustin, showing that it had taken effect somewhere. But on the other side the mate's pistol had snapped full in the face of the arch-mutineer, and Mr. Drew missed his aim and was disabled himself by a stunning blow from a handspike wielded by Tom Atkins. We rushed to the support of our friend, being now but three effective men against four who came on

pellmell, all regular plan of attack or defence being now abandoned.

The master-spirit, Maroney, infuriated with rage, singled me out as the main object of his vengeance, and rushed upon me with his long knife, while Pedro and the two Englishmen occupied themselves with the captain and mate. I parried Mike's desperate blows with the barrel of an old musket which I had seized upon after hurling my empty pistol at him without effect, for there were no revolvers in those days, and we had no time to reload anything. We were at too close quarters to aim and fire the king's arm. Which perhaps would have refused duty if I had done so.

I clubbed it and struck a heavy blow at Maroney with the stock, which took a partial effect upon his shoulder, but coming down with great force upon the quarter rail broke the stock from the barrel as short as a pipestem. Mike got an awful cut at my face, laying open one cheek—you see the scar here—and was following up his advantage with a savage thrust intended to stab me to the heart, when he was suddenly felled by the blow of a capstan-bar, delivered full upon the back of his skull, and Joe Ashley, our friend in the enemy's camp, turned his attention to Pedro who was getting the best of it in a desperate fight with the mate, just as Captain Knapp who had crippled the Englishman, breaking the head of one and the arm of the other, was also moving to reinforce Mr. Taylor. Short work was made with the Spaniard; a crack from Joe's capstan-bar staggered him and was followed up by another from the captain's large horse-pistol, which knocked him over the quarter rail into the sea. The victory was ours and the brig was safe from the mutineers.

But meanwhile, left to her own guidance, the old Jupiter had come up into the wind, got aback, gone round and round, and box-hauled herself about with a sort of roving commission. But as the breeze was light there was no danger, and no damage done. It was now time to get her under control again, to clear away the smoke of battle, and set matters to rights.

Maroney was found to be fatally wounded and died within forty-eight hours after the fight was over. Thus we were well clear of the two most dangerous men, and in all the other cases, were able to repair damages, though my own wound was a severe one, as well as that of Agustin, who had been shot

in the mouth by my bullet which was intended for his head. The poor black steward remained gagged and shut up in his room during all this uproar, and when released had turned nearly white from fright, expecting to be either hung at the yardarm or thrown overboard. But short-handed as we were, Captain Knapp took the wisest course in saying little about it, and assuming a conciliatory though firm tone toward the guilty men. There was no further danger, now that the two master-spirits, Maroney and Pedro, were gone to their final account.

The captain and second mate, when the alarm was first given, had found some of the firearms already loaded. This had been done privately by the steward, and was sufficient evidence of his guilty intentions, but he had not ventured to remove any of the guns before the moment for action had arrived, as their absence from the rack in the cabin would have been noticed. By the prompt action of the captain, in caging him quietly at the outset, we were rid of a powerful enemy acting in our rear.

Maroney had refused to trust Joe Ashley, and had left him in the forecastle, trusting to strike the blow so quickly as to get possession of the brig before any harm could be done by the interference of Joe. His distrust of me had returned after I had left him to take my trick at the wheel, and he had stationed Tom Atkins at the corner of

the gallery to keep a constant watch upon my movements, and to report if I was seen to hold the least communication with the officer of the deck. But all had been so cleverly managed that the mutineers had not the least suspicion of the warm reception in store for them when they moved aft to the attack.

We all felt sorry for the sad fate of poor Jordy the Shields man, a well-meaning but credulous fellow, who had been frightened into the business by Mike Maroney.

On our arrival at Liverpool, a legal investigation was held, and the survivors of the mutineers, three in number, were sentenced to seven years penal servitude, the steward, from not having been actually engaged in any overt act, escaping with an imprisonment of only one year.

It proved a lucky piece of business for me and Joe Ashley, as in addition to our pay, the owners rewarded us liberally for our agency in saving the vessel and their money bags.

I never knew just how much gold and silver were in those packages, but it was dearly bought with the lives of three men, and the wounding and maiming of nearly all the rest on board the Jupiter.

I shall carry this hideous mark through the whole voyage of life and have good reason to remember my first and last cruise in a lime-juicer.

THE ONYX RING.

BY MRS. A. S. WRIGHT.

EDITH RAYMOND had two lovers: not a strange thing, to be sure. Almost any pretty girl can boast as many. Indeed, it would not have been strange if Edith had had a dozen; for, in addition to the charms of personal beauty, she possessed those of a more substantial sort: namely, of gold.

It was not the number, but the character of one of the lovers, that rendered the condition of affairs peculiar. This one was Richard Oakley, the rejected suitor. His rival was Captain Harry Belknap, and it was his success that aroused Richard's ire. The latter was not one to accept defeat in anything quietly, but in the matter of love he showed himself especially belligerent.

Years ago he had made up his mind to have Edith Raymond for his wife; and now to have the prize he had coveted so long borne away by another was more than he could bear. He was determined that it should not be.

His ardor was not in the least abated by the fact that Edith did not love him. He wanted her to marry him all the same. And he *seemed* to think that if it were not for Harry, she would ultimately do so. What he really *did* think was not so clear. He himself could not have truthfully told, further than that he had set his mind on marrying Edith Raymond, and he meant to do it, in spite of fate.

He was not given to analyzing his emotions. His thoughts were mainly occupied in contriving means for gratifying the fierce and absorbing desires that swayed his undisciplined soul. In following the lead of his unhallowed impulses, he would sacrifice his better nature, together with the interests of his best friends; and nothing was permitted to stand in the way of his indulging whatever passion possessed him.

Edith well knew Richard Oakley's nature. They had lived in the same village ever

since they were children. When very young they had attended the same school. He had been a rude, cruel-hearted boy, and of late years he was known as a fast young man.

Edith's father and Richard's uncle, with whom he had lived since the death of his parents, which took place in his infancy, were the rich men of the village. They were also on intimate terms. So Edith and Richard were frequently thrown together; at least till Mr. Raymond died. This occurred when Edith was seventeen, a year prior to her engagement. Richard always manifested a fondness for Edith's society, but while her father lived he was deterred by her coldness from annoying her with any marked attentions.

He was anything but agreeable to her, and she was exceedingly sorry that he cared for her, as she knew he did; for she was not a coquette, and she found no pleasure in winning affection that must bring pain and disappointment to another.

In point of wealth, there was a wide difference in their positions, Edith being the heiress of all her father's property, whilst Richard had been left a penniless orphan, dependent on his uncle's bounty. The latter, having several children of his own, would not be likely to do much more for his nephew, now that he was twenty-one, and well able to look out for himself. He had given him a collegiate education, and offered him the choice of a profession; but this last Richard declined. He probably preferred to be supported in elegant idleness by Edith Raymond's money; for, despite her avowed indifference to him, he secretly regarded her as belonging solely to himself; and not till Captain Harry Belknap appeared upon the scene, in the character of Edith's lover, did he doubt his ability to ultimately win the heiress. Especially was he confident of success after the death of Mr. Raymond. He

felt that one powerful influence against him had been removed. His elation, however, lasted only a brief time. But a few months passed before Edith went with her invalid mother to visit some relatives in a distant city. There she met Captain Belknap; and, it is to be supposed, fell in love with him. At all events, she became very happy at the prospect of being his wife—or would have been, had it not been for the terrible threats of Richard Oakley, whose rage knew no bounds when she at length returned home accompanied by her lover.

He made no secret of his resentment, and openly declared his determination to be revenged. He repeatedly vowed that Edith should be his bride, or the bride of Death. This was considered, however, as mere meaningless raving by every one except Edith. It filled her with alarm. Still, she felt that there was no help for it. She would rather die a thousand times than be the wife of Richard Oakley. Yet, she feared more for the safety of Harry than for herself; though they were both in danger of harm at Richard's hands, she was very sure. For this reason she insisted on deferring their marriage till Harry should return from the voyage he was about to undertake to India. It would give Richard's anger space to cool; and, mayhap, before two years should elapse—the time Harry expected to be absent—he would become reconciled to his fate. At all events, she would be safer during their enforced separation unmarried; and her lover would be for a time beyond the reach of his foe.

She would gladly have accompanied Harry upon his voyage as his wife, had it not been for her mother, who clung to her with all the helplessness of a child. She could not leave her; and so there seemed nothing left her to do but wait, and hope that time would bring about changes favorable to her happiness.

Not an easy thing for one so young, this waiting for the possible coming of events that she most anxiously desired, but which seemed at best too uncertain to merit the least reliance. Yet, when Edith felt convinced what course was best for her, she seldom hesitated to pursue it, no matter how hard it might be. She was both brave and strong.

Painful as it was to part from Harry, she experienced a sense of relief when she saw the ship that was to bear him from her, per-

haps forever, slowly recede from the wharf. He was safe now from Richard Oakley's vengeance, at least.

So imminent had she deemed his peril from this source, that the danger to be encountered from the elements seemed trifling in comparison.

Before his departure Harry had given her a ring, a curious, antique gem, which had been presented to his father by an eastern monarch, whose life he had been instrumental in saving. It was a large onyx, with a heavy gold setting, upon which were engraved various odd characters and symbols. The stone itself contained an exquisite *intaglio* of a crouching lion, in the head of which was skillfully concealed a tiny spring. A very slight pressure upon this particular point caused a needle-like blade of steel to shoot forth from beneath the onyx; and this was said to be imbued with a poison so actively and subtly powerful as to cause almost instant death when introduced into the human system through a slight puncture of the skin.

Harry Belknap, however, had not the slightest faith in the traditional virtue of this seemingly insignificant weapon. He valued the jewel chiefly on account of its antiquity, and its being associated with the memory of his deceased father. The hidden properties of the steel had never been tested that he knew of; so he laughingly told Edith that when she found a fit subject she had better try its power.

Soon after Captain Belknap sailed for India, Richard Oakley also disappeared. Where he had gone nobody knew. In fact, he had no friend who cared to keep trace of him except his uncle; and even he, had he told the truth, would have said that he was not sorry to be rid of him; and he cared little where he went, so that he gave him no further trouble; for he had been more than usually reckless of late, and he had had more than one heavy bill to pay, in order to save the fellow from bringing dishonor on the family name. He did not say this to the public, however. He was too proud for that. He merely answered any inquiries concerning Richard by saying he knew nothing of him.

For two years Edith dwelt in her home, with her mother and their two servants, unmolested. If Richard had ever visited the village during that period, no one knew

it. People had ceased to speak of him, and it was doubtful if any one often thought of him, except Edith Raymond. His absence was far from removing her fear. She knew him too well to believe he would give her up so easily; and, notwithstanding the fact that no one had seen him, she had no doubt but that he had been an occasional, if not a frequent, visitor in the neighborhood.

She was possessed of an uncomfortable feeling that he was liable to drop in upon her at any moment. And, as the time drew near for her lover's return, she was beset with the most harassing anxiety. It was possible that Richard might be dead, but she could not bring herself to rely upon such a contingency. And, if he were living, his very silence was ominous. She could not tell in what way the fellow's cruel, passionate nature would vent itself, but she was well assured that he would yet visit her with trouble of some sort.

It had been Harry's request that the wedding should take place immediately after his arrival. And so, for several weeks prior to the time he was expected to be in port, preparations were being made for the event. When this became generally known, it was a much-talked-of affair; for both parties were wealthy, and wealth seldom fails to render its possessor an object of popular interest, especially in a not over-rich community, such as was to be found in the small New England village where Edith's home was located. Her lover's return and the approaching wedding being so widely known and speculated about, increased Edith's anxious forebodings. She saw that it would be easy for Richard Oakley to gain whatever information he might desire concerning Harry's movements, and thus facilitate the execution of any plan he might have formed for frustrating the marriage.

Strangely enough, her fears at this time were in nowise directed to herself; that she was in personal danger never once occurred to her, else she might perhaps have exercised more caution, and not have fallen so readily into the trap that was laid for her.

At the foot of the large garden at the rear of Edith's house, was situated a pretty, vine-covered summer-house. It was a favorite retreat of hers,—a sort of resting-place from troubles and vexations. Here she was almost sure to be found at some hour of the day. It seemed easier to forget her anxiety in this sheltered, quiet nook

than elsewhere; and even momentary relief from the fear that pressed so heavily upon her was grateful.

But the days dragged their slow lengths along, and nothing happened to mark their progress in the life of Edith, save that each succeeding one brought her nearer to the hour when Harry was to return. It seemed to her that if she could only see him safe in her home once more, all her fears would vanish; that, looking into his face, and hearing his voice, she could forget that there was danger.

The eventful day dawned at length, fair and bright as only a June day can be. Had Edith been superstitious, she would have considered this a happy omen; but she was not, and so it failed to re-assure her.

Harry was to arrive at noon, and the marriage was to take place at seven P.M. Shortly before the train was due by which he was expected, Edith stole quietly out of the house, and ran down to the summer-house to wait for its warning whistle.

A mass of tall, flowering shrubs grew close to the entrance, and extended around to a gateway in the rear of the summer-house, which opened from the garden into a grove of cedars. This grove sloped down to the bank of a swift-running river, thirty or forty rods distant.

All the morning Harry Belknap and Richard Oakley had been associated together in the mind of Edith; and the startling thought would every now and then send a chill of terror through her frame, that perhaps Richard was at that very moment executing some revengeful plan against her lover.

She longed for, and yet dreaded the coming of the train, lest Harry's absence should seem to confirm her fears. Tortured by such thoughts, she stood in the doorway of the summer-house, listening with strained ear to the rumbling sound she fancied she had caught in the distance, when she was startled by a sudden footfall close beside her. Turning quickly, Richard Oakley confronted her. One frightened glance of recognition, and the next instant a shawl, half saturated with chloroform, was cast over her head, and drawn tightly about her face; whilst strong arms pinioned hers in a vise-like embrace. She could not cry out. The sickening vapor seemed almost suffocating her.

Violent were her struggles for escape; but, despite her efforts, she felt herself lifted

from her feet and borne away at a swift pace.

She knew no more until she became vaguely conscious of Richard's voice calling her name. At first she thought she must be dreaming, but she was not long permitted to enjoy this illusion. All too soon past events crowded in upon her, and helped to make the vision real that met her gaze when she opened her eyes.

Silently, and without moving, she took in the range of objects in view from her reclining position, and as she did so a horrible fear crept through every fibre of her being. That she was in some underground abode was evident from the rough stone wall that rose a few feet from her, and formed the low-arched roof, as well as the earthy floor. A candle that stood on the ground in one corner threw a flickering light about the place, that gave it a strangely weird appearance. The walls were rough and jagged, and the shadowy niches seemed so many openings for the entrance of demons, Edith thought. There was only a chair and a box in the cavern, that she could discover, beside the pallet of straw and buffalo skins on which she was lying.

She feigned sleep for a time, in order to try to devise some plan that might possibly effect her release. She had no weapon, nothing even with which to take her own life, should there be no other means of escaping. Yes, there was the onyx ring! and a wild throb of joy shot through her heart. The tiny blade, if it possessed no other power, could let out her own life-blood.

Her face had been directed from Richard, but she presently turned, and met his triumphant gaze with a look of defiance. He saw it, and smiled mockingly. Drawing from his pocket a flask, he poured a little brandy into a small tin cup, and held it to her lips. She half put it away.

"You needn't be afraid," he said. "It is not a narcotic. You have had enough of that, the Lord knows. Here, drink, it will revive you."

Edith saw that he meant no harm, and swallowed the stimulant.

"Where am I?" she at length asked.

"I don't mind telling you," was the reply, "since you can't possibly get away. This is a cavern, which I chanced to discover more than a year ago, near the bank of the river that runs close by your house. We are not more than four miles or so from

there now, but are as safe as if we were a thousand miles distant."

"What are you going to do with me?" was her next question.

"Marry you, of course. The ship that is to receive us this very night is anchored not many miles away. The captain is my staunch friend, and the ceremony will be performed at sea. We shall proceed to some foreign country at once, and remain so long as I shall deem it for our interest. So you see that I mean all right, and I hope you will submit quietly to my plan."

"I'll never marry you, Richard Oakley, never!" exclaimed Edith, angrily.

"Why, yes, you will, my dear; you can't help it. I am not especially anxious to have our union sanctioned by law; however, that shall be left with you. But mine you must be, in spite of Heaven, or— You must give me a kiss now." And he reached out his arms to draw her toward him.

Edith looked into the villain's face and read there his purpose. To implore his mercy was worse than useless. There was no hope for her—none, unless, perchance, the onyx ring might be of service! It was a desperate thought, but her mind instantly grasped it as the only possible means of defence left her.

As the wretch's arms closed around her, and his hated face almost touched her own, she pressed her thumb firmly upon the secret spring that connected with the poisoned blade, and struck him with all her force full in the forehead.

The fellow drew back amazed. Such audacity was wholly unexpected. He had looked for tears and pleading, and had experienced peculiar pleasure in fancying Edith Raymond at his feet, humbly begging for freedom at his hands. And she had dared to strike him! He was half inclined to retaliate by giving her a sound beating. The shrew! But no, he might kill her if once he should give the reins to his anger; and that, doubtless, was what she wished. He would prepare a slower vengeance than that—a vengeance that should distil its unequalled bitterness into her life through long years.

But even while these thoughts were rushing through his mind, a strange dizziness seized him. Edith, who sat bolt upright upon the pallet, dumbly gazing into the glaring eyes that had looked as if he were ready to tear her in pieces like a wild beast,

saw a sudden grayness overspread his features. The facial muscles twitched, and his lips became livid. The eyes that were still fixed upon her widened, until they seemed starting from their sockets.

Transfixed by the horrible sight, she never moved nor averted her gaze, until, convulsed by a violent spasm, he fell out of his chair, and lay writhing upon the earth. Then she sprang to her feet, and looked about for some water—for something, she knew not what, to afford relief. But the poor wretch's struggles lasted only a brief space. Even while Edith bent over him, trying to get at the flask of brandy that was in his pocket, in her frightened endeavor to save his worthless life, the end came.

Edith saw that all was over. Then came the mad thought, "What if she were imprisoned there! Could she find the way out of the cavern?" Half-frenzied, she caught up the candle and commenced a careful inspection of the walls. Not a ray of light from without guided her endeavors. It might be evening, for aught she knew, and the possibility of this gave her hope. It would account for the utter darkness of the cavern.

After a protracted search, and various vain trials of her strength at displacing what appeared to be movable stones from the walls, she found one that seemed less likely to resist her efforts. It was a thin slab of granite, and had been half-concealed by the straw pallet upon which she had lain. With the aid of a small iron bar that she found hidden beneath the straw, she succeeded at last in prying it from its place; and, joy of joys! the clear night air rushed through the opening.

Crawling quickly out, she found herself beneath the bright, starlit heavens, and heard the roar of the river distinctly. She would follow that sound till she should reach its banks, and then she would have no difficulty in finding her way toward home—to some dwelling-house.

If it were not farther distant from her home than Richard had said, she would not have more than two miles or so to go before she would reach an open field, where was situated a farmhouse. If her strength would only last till she could get there, she would be safe.

Buoyed up by this thought, she groped her way along through the wood. It was slow and tiresome work; for, though the

sky was cloudless and the moon shone brightly, the shadows of the tall trees enveloped her in darkness. She stumbled at nearly every step. At first she rose to her feet quickly, and pressed on with energy, but by and by her strength began to fail. At every fall she felt less inclined to renew her efforts. The cold, wet ground became a most inviting couch. The mournful sighing of the wind charmed her senses more effectually than the softest lullaby of childhood. Her feet became like lead; her head swam. Once more she tripped among some tangled vines. She put out two feeble hands and crawled a few paces. She heard the roar of the river close by; this was all she was conscious of. Everything else had slipped from her exhausted brain. It had been her aim to reach this river; she remembered nothing beside.

For a moment the gurgling water sounded distinctly in her ear. Then the sound gradually receded, till only the faintest murmur reached her. And this murmur was the last thing of which she was conscious for many hours. She sank into a sleep so deadly in its heaviness, that she might never have wakened to life again if human aid had not been near at hand.

But she had lain in her perilous condition hardly an hour, when, just as the day was beginning to dawn, Harry Belknap, with a party of men, chanced to discover her. All night long, they, with hundreds of others, had been searching for her, but not a single clew to her probable whereabouts had any one been able to gain, till she was found upon the bank of the river, some three miles from home.

She was scarcely a quarter of a mile from the farmhouse she had striven to reach, and there they speedily carried her. Her own home was too far away; they feared she might die before they could reach it. Medical aid was procured with all haste, and by the timely use of proper remedies she was at length aroused from her swoon.

The first object that met her view as she wearily opened her eyes was the anxious face of her lover, who sat beside her. She did not start or betray the least surprise, but looked steadily upon him a few moments, while an expression of calm and restful happiness settled upon her countenance. She had evidently been expecting him in dreams, or else she had utterly forgotten the fact that this was their first

meeting for years. Harry did not move or speak; he waited for her to break the silence. Her mother and the physician, standing at a little distance, and without the range of her vision, looked at her in breathless suspense. They feared the moment of returning memory.

Presently she raised her hand, and her eye fell upon the onyx ring. Quick as thought she snatched it from her finger, and, casting it spitefully from her, shrieked again and again in terror. This paroxysm presently subsiding, she began talking of Richard Oakley, the scene in the cavern, and so forth, repeating over and over, in a disconnected, and at times unintelligible,

manner, the events of the preceding night. As her friends feared, a violent fever set in. For many days alternate hope and despair tortured the two loving hearts that watched and waited beside her. But fate was merciful to them. By and by it restored the one treasure that made life worth the having.

The crisis once passed, Edith's recovery was rapid. Youth and hope are powerful restoratives. They very soon brought back her accustomed health and strength.

After the lapse of a few weeks there was a very quiet wedding at Edith's home, when she became the happy wife of Harry Belknap.

THE PROTEGE.

BY ETTA W. PIERCE.

CHAPTER I.

The woman who stood in that miserable doorway, with arms akimbo, and a handkerchief bound about her head, was a virago of the worst stamp. It was a wretched street and a wretched place, swarming with half-naked children and pestilential odors. A temple of crime and poverty, — you will find them plentiful enough in any large city, and a pitiful, pitiful thing it was that a child's step should ever have echoed in it.

"Mag!" screamed the woman.

She came up the stair, with her great basket heaped with yellow shavings, slowly and wearily, — a little thing, so small and delicate that your heart would have ached for her.

"It is so cold," wearily.

"Clear out from this, girl!" cried the woman, pushing the child violently away. "I've got no place for lazy beggars here. Go down-stairs or out-doors, vagrant."

The child's eyes gleamed up fiercely, — large eyes and very dark ones they were, — the little blue hand at her side clenched itself one moment; then she turned, like a queen.

"You 'll never strike me again!" she said to the woman.

"I won't, will I?" threateningly.

"No."

Quick as a flash of thought, the girl darted by her. At the head of the rickety stairs she paused, to throw back one dark, defiant look, and then, dashing down them like a bird, fled up the stormy street.

The wind blew sharp from the east. It was almost dark. No matter. She was soon lost among the tortuous windings of the city streets. No matter. On, no matter where, if it was only away from that woman. She must never find her again. The great city was kind. It would swallow her up in its heart, and hide her safely somewhere; so the child ran on, breathless, through the gathering night.

By and by, the little feet grew so weary! Oh, how cold and wet and hungry she was! They had lighted the lamps at the street

corners. She could see them, up and down, flaming like great crimson stars through the mist. People jostled against her under their wide umbrellas. She crouched down in the shadow of a building, her hoarse breath coming in gasps.

A carryall, drawn by a pair of sleek gray horses, rolled up to the building and stopped. A tall driver leaped out.

"James, can you help me?" said a distressed voice.

James, by way of answer, planted his feet firmly on the sidewalk, and extended his arms to the occupant of the carriage.

She was a large woman, wrapped in a heavy shawl, with a broad, good-natured face, and iron-gray hair. James groaned as he lifted her to the pavement.

"I 'll be back soon," said the voice cheerily; "you won't leave the horses?"

"No, mum," from James.

Something dropped from the lady's hand. She did not see it, — she was walking away up the street. Mag leaped out from the shadows, and picked it up.

How the dark eyes glistened! A port-monnaie of glistening morocco, lined with crimson silk. Mag peeped in. Gold, silver, crisp bank-notes. She looked around. No one was near. The driver had walked off a considerable distance, and stood on the curb-stone with his hands thrust into his pockets, whistling, and his head turned away. The gray horses were her only witnesses. The child's cheek crimsoned; it was only a moment's hesitation. She crushed the splendid temptation in her little hand, and, flying up the street in the lady's footsteps, grasped her shawl, breathless.

"If you please, ma'am," holding out the port-monnaie.

"Why, bless me!" cried the lady, turning and looking down at the small, thin figure, "what's this?"

"You dropped it," said the child.

"Oh, indeed! I'm obliged to you. You ought to run right home, my dear; it's raining."

The lady went on up the street. Mag

turned and retraced her steps to the shadows, with head drooping. She crouched down there again, and was silent for a long time.

If the lady had only given her a few pennies! However, there was no use in crying about it. She had gone to bed hungry many a night in her little life. Bed? She must make her bed now on the hard stones there in the darkness. Nancy could not find her, and she was so tired. Little Mag curled herself into a small heap, and dropped her head on her knees.

It would not do, though; the stones were cold and wet, — Mag fell to watching the carriage. First idly, then with interest. It looked so close and warm in there among the blankets. No rain would reach there. She wondered where the tall driver had gone.

The gray horses stood very quiet. There were blankets and bundles in profusion in the carryall, and two snug dark corners under the back seat, which was empty. Still the rain fell steadily. The driver appeared by and by, and climbed up to his post; then the stout lady came back, and with great difficulty was assisted inside, and the carriage turned and went its way in the darkness; but the little figure crouching among the shadows had disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

Drip, drip, drip; dull and monotonous, on the pane, the broad terrace, the poplar walk, — the same tune that Lynne Raleigh had heard all day long, sitting in the still drawing-room of Marchmont, looking out on the wild autumn sky.

"What a deuced lonely old den it is, though," yawned Edward Marchmont, from the sofa.

Aunt Marchmont, dozing behind a gorgeous fire-screen, with her comely hands crossed on the lap of her gray satin dress, awakened suddenly.

"What did you say?" in that quick, sharp voice of hers.

Edward's handsome blonde head lay like a blossom among the crimson sofa-pillows. He looked at her from their level.

"I did not speak."

Aunt Marchmont gave her fire-screen a quick push, and went off into another doze. Lynne Raleigh's lip curled contemptuously.

They were the only occupants of the

room, — the old lady and her two nephews, Edward Marchmont, twenty years old, a dashing, high-bred fellow in an undress naval uniform, and handsome as a picture, with his pure Saxon skin and treacherous, sea-blue eyes. Lynne Raleigh, a mere stripling of fifteen, but tall already as the other, dark-eyed, dark-haired, with a brilliant, restless face, as truly Norman as the other was Saxon.

It was long past twilight. Lynne drummed impatiently on the pane, and looked out. Steady and strong the rain beat down through the poplars; he could hear the roar of the mill-stream half a mile away, and the wind roaring, like Bottom the weaver, up and down the old stage-road. It was really a very lonely place for a boy of fifteen. Vacations at the hall were not jolly. He was glad that he was going back to school on the morrow.

"Lynne," said Edward, turning on the sofa, "don't drum: the she-dragon will be waking again."

Lynne redoubled his drumming.

"Edward, you are a tremendous cheat."

"Thank you," said Edward languidly.

It was very natural that the two lads should hold each other in mutual aversion, — it had been a part of their education. Firstly, they were as unlike as night and day. Secondly, you might stand at the window where Lynne Raleigh sat, and stretching east and west, north and south, you would see nothing but the broad lands of Marchmont, — upland, forest, and meadow; a magnificent place, yet hardly worth the price Edward was paying for it, Lynne thought. Betwixt the two lads lay the right of heritage. One would be master at Marchmont some day. Which? the husband's nephew or the brother's son? Gossip could only shake her head, wondering, for the childless widow who now ruled in its gates had never by word or sign given her a single clew.

It was very little that Lynne Raleigh cared about the matter, as he looked out on the storm that wild October night. He had a small patrimony of his own, — enough, at least, to insure him a profession, — Edward might have Marchmont.

The stiff old family portraits along the wall, seen in the flickering light, looked weird and mocking at this conclusion.

"And were these Marchmonts really so much better than the rest of mankind?"

Lynne asked himself, derisively, staring at the dusky oils, "because they claimed descent from an earl, and were royalists in King George's time, and tyrants always? Bah!"

And yet he knew the aristocracy of the race had ever been and still was a something fixed and mighty, — a part of their heritage, in fact. It was the very atmosphere of the old drawing-room, — the paneled walls, the high-backed chairs, with their claw-feet and sombre coverings, the old tapestry and other cabinets; even Aunt Marchmont in her gray satin, with her white hands heavy with the family jewels, still represented, one and all, as firmly as ever, the arrogance of the ancient house. Why, those old portraits in their tarnished frames might have frowned on Lynne for daring to doubt their nobility.

Edward drew forth his watch.

"Nine o'clock! Heavens! what an interminable evening! When I am master here, I shall, first of all, fill this old rookery with youth and beauty, and all that sort of thing. There is nothing like a pretty woman for making a house pleasant, and it must be confessed the article is rather scarce at Marchmont."

"Did you ever hear the story of the milk-maid?" said Lynne dryly.

Edward reddened.

"You think these estates will pass out of the family name?" sarcastically. "Aunt Marchmont would tell you better. I am the last male heir. Don't build *chateaux en Espagne*, Lynne."

Lynne laughed. One provoking trait the boy had, was always to remain cool when his rival was angry.

"I shall not, — don't fear."

"Did you say it was nine o'clock, Edward?" said a sharp voice behind the fire-screen. Aunt Marchmont, erect, with wide-open eyes, looking at them both, and wrinkling her brow over her Roman nose.

Edward flushed guiltily.

"Nine, yes."

"And Griggs not back," said Aunt Marchmont.

Mrs. Griggs had served as house-keeper in the Marchmont family ever since her youth; they might almost be called her family, she had imbibed all their principles so thoroughly. Faithful old Griggs! Lynne looked out into the night beyond the window, and hoped nothing had happened to

her. The driver was not always proof against temptation, when it came in the shape of spirituous things, and it was a very long ride from the city through the storm.

"The bridge has been carried away up the road," said Edward carelessly. "They have n't run off into the mill-stream, or anything, have they?"

The wrinkles above the Roman nose deepened. Lynne threw up the window, and leaning out, tried to listen for the approach of the carriage, but he heard nothing save the roar of the mill-stream and the howl of the wind in the poplar walk.

"Can't some one be sent to see?" suggested Edward, languidly arranging the sofa pillows, and settling down upon them again, like a Sybarite.

"Nobody but the housemaids," answered Aunt Marchmont sharply.

Edward hummed softly.

"I will go," said Lynne, turning from the window.

What a fool the boy was! it was storming furiously. Edward could only look at him derisively, and there was neither yea nor nay from Aunt Marchmont. Lynne did not wait for them. Griggs was a trusty old friend, — she had petted him from his babyhood up. Without a moment's hesitancy he was out on the terrace, lantern in hand, in all the wind and rain.

The poplar walk stretched black and wide away to the iron gate. Lynne started down it, swinging his lantern and whistling cheerily.

"O my Nora Creina, dear,
My gentle, darling Nora Creina!
Beauty lies in many eyes" —

Hark! something that was not wind or rain sounded in the graveled carriage-way near by. Lynne flashed his lantern athwart the darkness. Lo! the familiar carryall, the gray horses, wet and streaming with their long plod through the mud, and Griggs herself on the front seat, with Jamie, fat and complacent.

"Master Lynne!" she cried, holding up her hands at sight of that bright, dark face in the lantern-light.

"So you are not in the mill-stream?" said Lynne.

"Bless his heart! we came Phillips's road," said Griggs.

Jamie, the Scotch coachman, drew up his horses at the door.

"Master Lynne, if you will just help me a bit now" — Griggs began.

Poor, clumsy Griggs! Lynne jammed her bonnet frightfully, but succeeded in disengaging her from the blankets, and bringing her safely to the ground.

"Now the bundles, Master Lynne," said the old housekeeper, "there 's heaps of 'um in there, back and front, and a band-box and a carpet-bag, — bless the boy!"

Lynne dived into the black depths of the carriage, and drew out the carpet-bag; next a brown paper parcel; next —

"What the dickens is this?" cried Lynne irreverently.

He lifted it out into the lantern-light. The hall door had been flung open, and Aunt Marchmont stood in the hall, looking out at them.

"Mercy on us!" shrieked Griggs.

"The devil!" cried Jamie, staring.

"It 's a child," said Lynne solemnly.

Mag! Quite a child, in fact, but not half so heavy as the carpet-bag, thought Lynne. He had dropped her from his arms, and there she stood among them, winking a pair of large, sleepy eyes, and looking from one to the other, wondering, but not at all abashed.

"Goodness gracious me! how did it come there!" cried Griggs.

"Come into the hall, Griggs!" commanded Aunt Marchmont dryly.

The child laid hold of Griggs's shawl, and followed, clinging to it, and rubbing her sleepy eyes.

"Now," said Aunt Marchmont, confronting them, with a rustle through all her gray satin, "who is it? and how came it here?"

"Answer the lady," cried Griggs, shaking the child.

Lynne looked at the blue, pinched face, and torn, scanty dress, and thought the first question rather dubious.

"It rained, and I got into the wagon," said the child, with the utmost composure.

Griggs caught hold of her, and turned her round to the light.

"O dear heart! it 's the self-same one that brought me my purse!" she cried out.

Aunt Marchmont just shifted one white hand into the other, and looked at them.

"You see," explained Griggs in quite a state of mind, "I lost my purse getting out

of the carriage, — Jamie is so clumsy, helping one, and this gal found it and ran after me, — a vagabond, too, — who 'd have thought it?"

The child's hungry eyes drooped, — the handsome lad with the lantern, and the lady in that shining dress, gazed at her so curiously.

"And in the name of all that 's wonderful how came such a wee thing as that out in the streets such a night as this?" cried Lynne.

"Oh, I 've run away from Nancy," said the child shyly.

"And who 's Nancy?"

"I get shavings for her."

Edward Marchmont came out from the drawing-room, and paused behind the gray satin.

"Well, 'pon honor, here 's a tableau! Where did you find that, Griggs?"

"Bless you! I did n't find her at all," answered Griggs, "it was Master Lynne."

"What does Madam Nancy call you when she speaks to you?" said Lynne facetiously, quite unmindful of the interruption.

"Mag," said the child.

"Nothing more?" solemnly.

She shook her head.

"Did she give you any supper tonight?"

"Oh, no," hungrily.

"You hear!" said Lynne to poor Griggs.

"What 's to be done with her?" asked Griggs helplessly.

Edward took out his eye-glass.

"Hair like a boy's, — a starved nondescript, I should say; rather good eyes, though," he commented carelessly.

She turned and looked at him. Yes, the eyes were good, and keener and brighter than a hawk's.

"Seeing it 's such a night to turn anything out in, if she might be allowed to stay" — began Griggs, glancing covertly at the lady of Marchmont.

She stood within the lighted drawing-room, and the haughty old Marchmont portraits in the back-ground, and made a slight gesture.

"She can stay."

"Bless me!" said Griggs. It was something of a surprise, — Aunt Marchmont had always been such a cold, hard woman.

"Why do you keep her standing here?" sharply.

"Come!" said Griggs to the child.

She took Mag by the hand, and in the

face and eyes of the heirs of Marchmont, and led her away.

Edward made a wry grimace.

"What the deuce are they going to do with that little heathen?"

"Oh, adopt her, perhaps," said Lynne carelessly. "It would be like Aunt Marchmont. Good-night to you, Edward."

Fate stood that night in the Halls of the Marchmonts, with her finger on her lip, and smiled.

CHAPTER III.

It was a law-office, large and pleasant, on the sunny side of the street, and fitted up comfortably, even handsomely. Overhead arched a cold, blue, winter's sky; beneath, ebbed and flowed the life and clamor of a great city. The sign on the office door ran thus:—

LYNNE RALEIGH,
COUNSELLOR AND ATTORNEY-AT-LAW.

A few years make many changes. That truth will hold good the wide world over. They had made quite a number here.

In an easy-chair, drawn up to a desk strewn with papers, sat Lynne himself, somewhat older than when we saw him last, and looking the dark, handsome, haughty fellow that he had promised to look in boyhood. A figure like an Arab's, distracting black curls, smelling slightly of French perfume, eyes that he always knew how to use, and a firm, aristocratic mouth,—the owner of these suddenly laid down his cigar.

"Come in," he said, in answer to a knock at the door.

He did not turn his head. It was the hour for the morning's mail. A gaunt office-boy deposited it upon the table, and straightway disappeared.

"The child is a ghost," said Lynne, looking the letters carelessly over. "Jones, Smith, Robinson—well—as I live, a letter from Marchmont!"

It was a quaint envelope, addressed with great care in a stiff, cramped hand. He broke the seal and read,—

"DEAR NEPHEW,—You are hereby invited to spend the coming holidays with us at the Hall. If it should please you to arrive on Christmas Eve, you will be met at the station. I hope you are well. From your aunt, ELIZABETH MARCHMONT."

Stiff, angular, just like Aunt Marchmont herself. Lynne smiled as he laid it down. It was years since he had visited Marchmont. He had had his own way to fight in the world, and had quite lost sight of the old Hall in the struggle. Neither had he written frequently. If she had heard from him at all it was through Edward or public report. After all, it was very good in Aunt Marchmont to remember him. He would accept her invitation.

"Raleigh," said a voice in the doorway.

A tall, elegant figure in an undress naval uniform stood looking in at him, half-hesitating to enter. It was a strikingly handsome face,—blonde, with a heavy mustache and sea-blue eyes, and a certain knowing, nonchalant expression, peculiarly its own. Lieutenant Marchmont had changed even less than Raleigh in the years since we saw him last.

"How are you?" said Lynne, carelessly, pushing forward a chair. "Fresh from Mrs. Oleander's ball, or the party at Howard's, or Jack Astley's champagne supper, or?"—

"Astley's, of course," answered Marchmont, throwing himself into a chair with lazy grace; "how in mischief does such a perfect mole as you are, burrowing among these law books, know what *le beau monde* is doing?"

Lynne shrugged his shoulders.

"There are birds in the air," he said dryly. "I also am a member of *le beau monde* occasionally,—when I have the leisure."

"Bah! take the leisure," said Edward, lighting a cigar, "as I do, you know."

Lynne looked at him with quizzical eyes, twirling Aunt Marchmont's note round his finger.

"Edward, how many years is it since you were at Marchmont?"

"Marchmont?" said the young aristocrat carelessly, "Oh, five or six. I've been thinking of the old lady considerably of late,—I trust she is declining."

"Not knowing, I could n't say," said Lynne. "Here's a little note from our mutual relative. I go to Marchmont Christmas Eve. If you are a dutiful nephew, you will do likewise."

"I? no, thank you. Kate Astley gives a soiree on that particular evening. You need n't mention the fact, Raleigh, but that girl is positively breaking my heart."

Lynne's eyes opened to a provoking width.

"Your heart? That's good. Astley, — Astley, — a ward of Mason's, is n't she? I studied law with him. She is worth half a million."

"Half a million and the beauty of Cleopatra," sighed Edward, drooping perceptibly. "That is true. However, if Aunt Marchmont would be kind enough to shuffle off this mortal coil, my fortune would be half a million more. Ah! blissful day, — think of it."

"Yes," said Lynne dryly.

"I will install you as my chief counsellor, old boy," continued Marchmont, waving his cigar airily. "You shall drive the handsomest pair of bays in the city, — by Jove, you shall!"

Lynne laughed.

"Thank you. By the by, Edward, what has become of that girl Aunt Marchmont used to have with her? You remember? I have n't visited Marchmont since Griggs brought her there."

"Mag — Margaret — or whatever her name was? She's with them yet, I believe. Aunt Marchmont is educating her, — a very poor way of spending money, I call it. She is as ugly a little chit as you ever clapped eyes on."

"Those sort of children generally are."

"I think I'll run up to Marchmont for a day or two," said Edward, meditating. "I am anxious regarding the health of my respected relative. You may expect me."

Lynne nodded. The matter was settled, — a trivial matter enough to the parties.

A week after, Mr. Lynne Raleigh packed his traveling-bag, locked his office door, gave the gaunt boy a bank-note for Christmas, and then marched off to take the afternoon train for Marchmont.

The wind blew sharp from the north, — the ground was covered with fresh-fallen snow. A few trees growing together around the depot, rattled, like skeletons, through all their frozen branches. It was nearly dark when the train came puffing in.

"Jove! this is comfort," grumbled Lynne, as he got out of the car, and stood for a moment, buttoning the fur collar close to his handsome throat. "Marchmont is five miles away. I should be happy to know who is here to meet me."

At his first survey of the premises, he

concluded he had been duped. A few sleighs were standing outside the depot; but not a familiar face was visible. Suddenly Mr. Raleigh's attention was arrested.

Nearest the platform stood a light cutter, with fur robes, lined with crimson, and attached to the same a bright-eyed, vicious-looking horse, who was jingling his bells, and pawing the snow spitefully. The cutter had one occupant, — a slight, dark girl, in a fur cloak and a gay little hood, who sat among the robes, holding a pair of crimson reins, and watching the cars disgorge, quite at her ease. Lynne came across the platform.

"Here, you!" in a lovely tone to the depot-master, "do you know if I can get a conveyance to Marchmont?"

The small lady in the cutter looked at the speaker a moment, then leaped out and threw the reins over the horse's back.

"Stand still, Jehu!" in a little, quick voice. "Well, sir, are you Lynne Raleigh?"

Lynne, somewhat surprised, answered savagely, lifting the fur cap from his black curls, —

"I am happy to inform you that I am."

"Will you have the goodness to get into the cutter?" said the young lady, whose large eyes and remarkable gravity made Lynne think of an owl.

"Thank you — greatly obliged," said the young gentleman, quite overcome. "Mrs. Marchmont — that is — I presume — this is somewhat remarkable, by Jove!"

The dark girl coldly surveyed him from head to foot.

"I came here for Mrs. Marchmont's nephew, Lynne Raleigh. If you intend riding to Marchmont, you had better get into that cutter, — it's rather cold standing here."

It must be confessed that the off-hand impudence of this young female somewhat astonished Mr. Raleigh. Young females in general were given to treating him with considerable deference. His curiosity was piqued.

"Miss — Miss?" he began, scrambling into the sleigh with some difficulty; for Jehu began to kick up his heels. "Pardon me, — your countenance is familiar; but I have been so rude as to forget your name."

The familiarity of her countenance seemed to strike the young lady in a ludicrous light. She laughed as she gathered up her crimson reins, — an elfish, ringing laugh, full of music.

"My name," solemnly, "is Margaret Marchmont. If it's all the same to you, I should like to intimate that you never saw my countenance but once before in your life. Get up, Jehu!"

Lynne sat quite helpless, while Miss Margaret flourished the reins over Jehu's back, and sent him dashing away, like a small tempest, up the white street. The wind blew sharp as a knife, in their faces. Between the snow flung from the horse's hoofs, and the mad speed at which they were going, Lynne found himself all but extinguished at the onset; but that girl! Bolt upright beside him, her hood had half-fallen back, her black eyes dancing, and her cheeks crimson with bloom. There she sat, shaking the gay reins and urging on her horse, as wild and handsome a thing as could well be imagined, whirling over that waste of cold, white snow. Lynne could see now how very young she was,—a mere girl, not more than fifteen, surely.

"Mag—that is—I beg your pardon, Miss Marchmont (she has stolen my aunt's name) if you will allow me the honor, I think it would be safer for me to take the reins, and drive in your stead."

She regarded him contemptuously.

"You! you drive Jehu? Ha! ha! Get under the robes, Mr. Raleigh: it's the coldest ride out of Lapland from here to the Hall."

"But, good heavens!" cried Lynne, as the horse's hoofs beat against the dasher, "you are not half strong enough—you'll break both our necks before we get to Marchmont—don't you see?"

"I see," said Mag, in a dreadful tone, "that you are afraid. Jehu belongs to me,—he was a birthday present from Mrs. Marchmont. I never trust him with any body."

Lynne braced himself in his seat.

"Well, drive away, my dear. I can ride as fast as Jehu can go, only I advise you to be careful about the corners."

On they went. The bells jingled shrilly. Trees, houses, and other sleighs whirled past, like the vague things of a dream. Lynne fairly gasped for breath. Suddenly Miss Margaret set her teeth.

"You had better hang on to me, now," coolly; "here is a sharp pitch, you see; and there's a corner just below. Jehu dreads corners."

Lynne shut his eyes, not, however, be-

fore he had felt an ardent desire to box the minx's ears. He knew well enough what was coming. Down the hill they flew, like mad, Jehu gave a vicious plunge, kicked up at random, and round the corner.

Lynne knew no more for several moments.

The stinging cold must have restored his senses. He opened his eyes to find himself lying in some three feet of snow, and Madge standing beside him, shaking snow in abundance from her cloak and hood, and looking down on him with a contemplative air.

"So you are not dead, are you?" said the young lady cheerfully. "I thought you were! Jehu often does so,—he has gone home, and we shall have to walk the rest of the way."

Raleigh rose to his feet and shook himself. The nonchalance with which she entertained the possibility of his death was delightful.

"How far is Marchmont?" asked Lynne dubiously.

"Oh, not more than a mile away," answered Margaret, airily, tying on her hood; "we can reach it by dark."

A mile on that execrable road! Well, there was no help for it. They set out, Margaret leading the way,—her slender feet leaving dainty prints in the white snow, for him to follow; and her tongue running like a magpie's. Long before reaching the Hall, Raleigh had learned that Miss Madge was at a fashionable boarding-school, and had come home to pass the holidays; that Aunt Marchmont petted and indulged her to excess; that Griggs had grown old and deaf, and that Aunt Marchmont was so feeble now that she seldom left her chair, and was wheeled from one room to another, by the servants, who seemed to be likewise sinking into the sere and yellow leaf. Verily, the old place had changed.

Aunt Marchmont sat waiting for them in the drawing-room. Outside, the terrace was white with snow,—the giant poplars stood up tall, and leafless; but Lynne had never seen the room look so bright. The Christmas wreaths at the windows, the sprays of holly fastening back the heavy curtains, flowers on the mantel,—a gray kitten, plump and sleek, dozing on the hearth, a book here and there,—these were none of Aunt Marchmont's treasures. There was certainly a household fairy at the Hall.

She held Raleigh off, and looked at him with dim eyes.

"His father over again," she said, with a touch of pride; "the Raleigh were always a handsome race. Sit down, lad; it is many a long year since I saw you last." A reproach in the tone.

"My dear aunt," began Lynne, touched by that aged, feeble face. She interrupted him sharply, —

"Don't tell me! I know! Young people don't run after sickness and old age, unless it is for the sake of what they are to leave behind. Madge, will you tell Griggs we are to have tea in the drawing-room to-night?"

Although quite innocent of the insinuation thus shot at him, Lynne knew the lady too well to contest the matter. He preferred warming himself on the hearth, and partaking of her hearty Christmas cheer, instead. In the mean time, Miss Margaret had disappeared in the direction of the stable. When she again entered the drawing-room, it was with the demure air of a kitten who had been stealing cream. Not a word was said about the ride. She sat down opposite Raleigh, where his opportunity to criticize her was improved to the utmost. She began to interest him.

Disrobed of her hood and cloak, Lynne saw how slight and graceful she was. Her head was classically elegant, and covered with masses of blue-black braids, so heavy and broad that Lynne wondered how the child ever managed to fasten them at all. She was a little sallow, to be sure, and somewhat thin, and her nose was saucy, and *retrousse*; but the handsome critic immediately agreed that no face could be really plain, with such a pair of eyes in it as Miss Madge possessed. Edward had made a mistake.

"He would be flirting furiously with her in an hour," he said, to himself.

As if tired of this scrutiny, Madge suddenly raised said eyes, and gave Raleigh a tremendous stare. It was done maliciously, revengefully. The young lawyer winced perceptibly, and moved back his chair. Then he saw her in another light, — sitting at Aunt Marchmont's feet, the saucy head bowed, the little dark hands were folded on her lap, and the firelight shimmering in her bright, black eyes. Aunt Marchmont touched the soft braids fondly.

"Another Christmas, dear" —

The sad, sorrowful face said all that she left unfinished. The girl's lids drooped. Heavens, there was really a tear on her long lashes. Aunt Marchmont saw it, and fell into conversation with Lynne immediately.

His studies, his admittance to the bar, his prospects for the future, — Lynne discussed them well, and he really thought that girl was interested, until he saw her dozing against Aunt Marchmont's knee, — then he concluded she was not. Suddenly a chess-board intervened between himself and Aunt Marchmont, and Madge, wide-awake and impudent, sat herself down on one side.

"Do you play?"

"Occasionally," said Lynne. It was his favorite game.

"Better than Griggs?"

Griggs! What, had she been wheedling that old and respectable person into playing chess with her? Raleigh sat down opposite. He would let her know how he could play.

He did not yawn again that evening. Aunt Marchmont fell asleep in her chair, and neither of the two antagonists knew it. Mr. Raleigh had found his match. There Miss Madge sat opposite him, calm and collected, and with a skill and coolness eminently provoking, beat him at his favorite pastime again and again.

Mr. Raleigh bore it serenely at first; then he grew impatient, then angry.

"Hist!" said Madge, holding up her finger mockingly. "Aunt Marchmont is asleep, — don't swear! You will do better next time."

Lynne sent his chessmen rolling across the table.

"Good-night," she said, dancing toward the door, and flinging a little laugh over her shoulder at him. Lynne went away to his own room.

"The little monkey," he thought. "She has been laughing at me the whole evening. Some day, Miss Margaret Marchmont, I will be quits with you, my dear."

One fine, sunny morning, Edward Marchmont appeared at the Hall, dashing and handsome as ever. Kate Astley had accepted him.

"Congratulate me, my dear fellow," he said, drawing Lynne aside. "Half a million, and that Venus! By the way, have

you noticed how very infirm Aunt Marchmont is?"

Yes, Lynne had noticed.

"Well, — good heavens! who is that fright?" cried the fastidious Marchmont, shocked at a sudden view of Madge, running across the terrace, with her hood in her hand and her hair flying.

"The *protege*, — be careful!" Lynne had just time to say.

She came in; but paused on the threshold, with black eyes dancing. Edward received a low, mocking courtesy.

"I am happy to see you, Lieutenant Marchmont. How is your health?" as if her life depended on his answer.

Edward looked well at the graceful figure and the saucy dark face before he answered. Why, the girl was all but handsome! It might be well to cultivate her a little.

"My health at present is good," said Edward pensively; "how long it will continue so is doubtful."

"Ah!"

"I am troubled with a heart disease," sighed Edward, caressing his blonde mustache; "it is violent at times, — I felt the symptoms as you came in."

"For Heaven's sake," said Lynne, aside, "remember who you are talking to, Marchmont! Don't treat that child like one of your city flirts?"

"Congratulate me," repeated Madge absently, transfixing Marchmont with her eyes. "'Venus, and half a million — that fright' — hum! *au revoir*, Lieutenant Marchmont;" and she was off, humming as she went, —

"Go back, my lord, across the moor:
You are not her darling."

Raleigh laughed outright, and closed the small aperture in the window that had betrayed them. He had no more fears for Miss Marchmont.

That night in the old drawing-room Edward suddenly heard Aunt Marchmont call to him. Lynne and Margaret were playing chess at the other end of the room. He turned quickly.

"Edward," said the old lady, with an eager, tremulous face, "who is this fine lady of yours? Sit here and tell me."

He colored a little, and then looked down at her blandly.

"She is a lady, my dear aunt, fitted to

rule over any establishment, — beautiful, accomplished, — worthy of a king, — any number of them, in fact. I consider myself a fortunate fellow."

With something that sounded like a sigh, Aunt Marchmont glanced across to the chess-table.

"I thought," she said, slowly drawing one hand through the other, and speaking as if to herself, "I thought to have had it different; but it is better so. You were not made for each other; it is hard to guide young hearts in these things."

"Ma'am?" interrogated Edward, in blissful ignorance of her meaning.

"No matter!" said Aunt Marchmont sharply, "it will never be, I tell you! The child is not for you."

"My dear aunt," said Edward, aghast, "did you intend for me to espouse that — that" — staring over at Madge.

"No," curtly. "Marry as you choose," and Aunt Marchmont sank back in her chair, and said no more.

To the last day of his life, Edward remembered that conversation with a pang of regret.

One long, lazy morning, passed in stretching his handsome mouth with yawns, and teasing the dark, fiery girl, whom he now regarded with more interest, since she had once been appropriated to himself, and Edward, quite satisfied that Aunt Marchmont was in a rapid decline, felt that he must return to the tender companionship of Kate Astley. Raleigh was to follow in the evening train.

"I shall resign my commission," he said, by way of soliloquy, "as soon as the event happens. It is deuced queer the old lady should have wanted to unite the last of the Marchmonts to a girl whose birth and parentage, to say the least, is in an eclipse. I'm surprised at her taste. However, that girl has got amazing eyes of her own."

He was drawing on his gloves in the hall, when he caught a glimpse of those same eyes peeping at him through a half-open door, — she was going back to school on the morrow.

"Margaret," he called pensively. "I'm off! 'It may be for years, and it may be forever,' you know."

"Yes," said Madge solemnly.

"I am ordered to the African Squadron," with a sigh.

"O my!" groaned Madge.

He advanced considerably nearer. Her face had a dark, tantalizing beauty that tempted him.

"Margaret, we may never meet again!" with dreadful emphasis.

Her head drooped. He really thought there was a tear in her eye. Was it possible the little thing liked him? He drew nearer still.

"Margaret, if I should ask you to bestow one kiss upon me,—cousinly, you know, my dear?"—

No answer. He was sure now that she was crying.

"Weep not for me, child," soothingly: "reserve thy tears for a worthier object. What might have been,—ah, but the kiss?"—

Still no answer. He put his arm about her,—his cheek all but touched her own. Then Miss Margaret darted suddenly back. A stinging little cuff that he felt for an hour after, administered with remarkable science, fell sharply upon Edward Marchmont's ears. Madge broke away, with dancing eyes, and ran up the staircase, sending back to him her shrill, mocking laugh. Oh, the little cheat! Edward Marchmont, with a very flushed and chagrined face, went on his way, a wiser man.

CHAPTER IV.

The Eastern story of Alnaschar is a good one to profit by. We are all given, more or less, to similar follies, and in the end we generally see them meet similar fates. The higher we build our castles, the more sure they are to fall.

A soul went out at midnight, in a lonely old chamber of Marchmont Hall. It was two years after the date of the last chapter. Griggs, faithful to the last, and a dark-eyed girl, stood by the bedside, heard the last faint word, wept their sad tears on the chill hands, as they crossed them on her bosom, and then the world knew that Elizabeth Marchmont, with all her faults and virtues, was no more.

"And her will?" clamored the multitude.

It had been signed and sealed a month before. Mason, the grave old lawyer in whose office Lynne had studied Coke and Blackstone years previous, and who had been Aunt Marchmont's solicitor, coolly

forwarded the following note to his old pupil:—

"MY DEAR FELLOW,—Your existence is quite ignored in the document. Every farthing of the real and personal property of your deceased relative is bequeathed to the young lady known as Margaret Marchmont. You can condole with the other nephew,—your portions are equal."

Lynne arose and took a turn across his office floor, after reading the above. He was surprised, but disappointed? no. Edward would be the greatest sufferer,—he wondered how the news would affect Miss Astley,—rumor called her ambitious as well as beautiful. So, after all, that little dark girl was the mistress of grand old Marchmont,—and a princely fortune she must have with it, too. Well, it was the best thing Aunt Marchmont could have done.

So much for Lynne's soliloquy.

He was strolling along Broadway that afternoon, when he encountered the gilt buttons and blue coat of Edward. He knew by the young gentleman's sullen greeting that the matter was well known to him also.

"How are you?" said Lynne cheerfully, linking his arm in Marchmont's, but waiting for him to broach the subject.

"It's all up with me," answered Edward savagely.

"What is up?"

"Fortune, love,—everything. I am ordered to a cruise in the Mediterranean,—congratulate me."

"What?"—

"Yes? One woman has blasted my expectations, another has broken my heart,—confound the whole sex!"

"Miss Astley"—Lynne vainly endeavored to begin.

"Miss Astley," with a sneer, "informed me this morning that our engagement was broken. She had suddenly discovered that her heart had deceived her,—meaning that she had had a more eligible offer; here is the ring."

He handed it to Lynne, broken in three parts, and smiled grimly.

"Let her go!" he said, tossing the pieces into the street.

Thus fell Edward's air-castles! He had thought them founded so securely that the

blow was all the harder to bear. They walked on in silence.

"You are a lucky dog, Lynne," said Edward, presently; "growing rich and famous, and better yet, keeping yourself heart-whole. Well, this never will kill me. Come up to my rooms tonight, won't you? I shall go away so soon, you know."

So Edward departed for the far-off Mediterranean. The winter that followed was a brilliant, busy, but over-tasked one for Lynne. He was steadily reaping, as Marchmont had said, both fame and fortune; and the best fame and fortune, too, that man can reap, because it was the work of his own heart and brain; but, by the spring-time, this incessant labor began to tell upon him.

"It will never do," said his physician, shaking his head, gravely; "you must rest."

"How can I rest here?" despairingly.

"Here! who said anything about here? Take yourself off! Go to Europe, Asia or Africa, just as you please, only leave New York and this confounded law-office!"

That was how Lynne came to go to Europe, having preferred that grand division to Asia or Africa. It must be a flying trip, he thought, when he started, for he had no time to waste; and unto this decision the score or two of eligible beauties who had been courting his favor in vain throughout the season breathed a fervent amen. He had heard no word from Edward, except that he had resigned his commission, and was traveling somewhere on the continent. Possibly they might meet.

One day in early autumn, Lynne Raleigh, brown, bearded and handsome, came down from the Rhine and the Alps, with a score of other travelers, to indulge in a short siesta by the clear green waters of Lago Maggiore. He had found lodgings in an Italian house, with arched passages and latticed windows, set in a garden of cypress and mulberry trees. It was a dreamy, silent place, where, from a vine-hung balcony, one could follow the rocky mountain sides up to their sharp, blue peaks, descending again to the terraced gardens, rank with luxuriance and bloom; rocks where the broad-leaved aloes clung, some gleam of white walls in a distant town; islands, sleeping purple and dreamy in the hazy sun, and far-off down the dark-green water to

where the plains of Lombardy lay musky and sweet with vineyards.

Full length on the shore of the lake, Lynne lay one afternoon, his sketch-book and pencils thrown carelessly down beside him; his arms crossed under his head, and the wind just lifting his bright, dark hair. Far off, the outline of the Alps stood dim and shadowy against the sky. The wind was heavy with the scents of roses on the terraces. The shadows of mountain, grove and garden stretched long and dark across the lake; it was almost sunset.

Presently on Lynne's dull, dreamy ear there struck a sound like the soft dip of oars in the green water. He remained motionless, listening to it until it seemed almost at his feet, then he started up. It was a skiff, airy and light, as suited that placid water and smiling sky. There were two figures seated in it, — a gentleman with his back toward Lynne, handling his oars lazily and watching his companion like a lynx; and that companion, a lady, dressed in black from head to foot, and half reclining on a seat of scarlet Turkish cushions, trailing one white hand through the water behind her.

As they drew nearer, drifting with a slow, languid motion, a certain familiar air about the movements and figure of the gentleman made Lynne regard him with keen attention. The blonde curls, the well-poised head, the broad shoulders, — where had he seen them before? If he would but turn for a moment! He would not turn, but directly Lynne heard the low voice of the lady, and then her companion laughed, and that laugh was as familiar to Lynne as his own, — it was Edward Marchmont.

Having recovered from the surprise of this discovery, Lynne, himself unseen, proceeded to scrutinize the lady. It was a purely American face, in spite of its dark eyes and hair; oval in form, with a skin like marble, and arched, scarlet-red lips. The black, dreamy eyes were set under beautiful brows, and a cascade of hair was gathered away from her face, and, from a sumptuous knot behind, fell rippling, as she sat down to the scarlet cushions, in heavy, purple-black curls. She was looking off to the mountains, her lips half-parted, a cluster of snowy blossoms in one hand, and the other shining like marble in the placid water.

"Good Heaven!" thought Lynne, startled

into active, eager life by this vision, "is it the spirit of Maggiore?"

Edward's wife, more likely; yet that could hardly be, — at least, he had never heard of such a personage. Lynne gathered up his sketch-book; they were going to land just below, he would go down and meet them. There was enough of the lover displayed in Edward's face and manner, as he assisted the lady from the skiff, to lay Lynne's doubts at rest. He smiled as he thought of Kate Astley. There are few hearts in this world that possess the dreadful capability of breaking.

Marchmont turned as he heard Lynne's footstep behind him. He looked surprised, then blank, then doubtful.

"Raleigh, as I live! how are you, old fellow, and how came you here?"

"How?" said Lynne, coolly, and eying the dazzling vision in black, "why, down the Alps, to be sure, as you came yourself, I presume;" and to himself, "he does n't mean to present me."

Whether he did or did not, mattered little. With a quiet grace that quite upset Lynne's amazed senses, the young lady held out her hand to him.

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Raleigh!"

"Madam" — stammered the world-wise, self-possessed Raleigh, flushing through his handsome skin.

"Ah, you do not know me?" with a quiet little smile. "I forgive you, — it is nearly three years since we met; I am Margaret Marchmont."

Mag, the castaway, Mrs. Griggs's foundling? no, but Miss Marchmont, the calm, elegant beauty, the heiress of half a million, with a face like the old Greek antiques! Edward watched the meeting of those two hands jealously.

"I little thought of this," said Lynne, with dark, admiring eyes.

"I left America three months ago," said Miss Marchmont, gathering up her mourning drapery; "my guardian, Mr. Mason, of New York, is here with his wife and family. We are going on to Florence and Rome."

"Mason! he is an old friend of mine," answered Lynne earnestly; "and where did you find Edward?"

"Oh, we did not find him," with a wicked little laugh, "he found us at Frankfort. He had seen our names, I believe, in an

American paper among a list of passengers."

"Will you take my arm, Miss Marchmont?" interrupted Edward, flushing hot.

"Hum!" said Lynne to himself, suddenly enlightened on several points.

Miss Marchmont turned.

"We shall remain here several days," she said; "Mrs. Mason is not well. The house is near by. — you will call?"

"Yes," said Raleigh, looking down into her soft, black eyes.

So she bade him good-by, and went away with Edward, whose satisfaction was only too apparent as he drew her hand through his arm, and conducted her from Lynne's vicinity. Such quiet appropriation provoked Lynne. He watched them until they were out of sight among the trees, then sauntered away to his lodgings.

He had not reached them when Edward's quick footsteps overtook him in the path. He was still flushed, and he looked at Lynne distrustfully.

"Charming place, is n't it?"

"Very," dryly.

"Well, what of Miss Marchmont?" as if desperate.

"She is a rare, pale, queenly Margaret. Edward, you are badly in love with her."

"Certainly," answered Edward, "she is beautiful and rich, — why should n't I love her, pray?"

"Oh!" said Lynne dryly again.

"One cannot afford to marry for the sake of love, alone, you know," explained Edward, "or, at least, I cannot; but here were no thing lacking. Kate Astley, with all her vanity, would go mad with envy, to look in that faultless face."

"What are you doing here, — courting her favor?" said Lynne, with matchless irony.

"I am trying to preserve Miss Marchmont from the fangs of old Mason," said Edward, biting his lip; "he has got a nondescript son that he is very anxious to bestow upon her, — that is all."

"You are very kind," said Lynne ironically.

They walked on in silence, Edward half angry, half sullen.

"How long do you remain here?" he broke out abruptly.

"Oh, I do not know, — it don't matter," was the unsatisfactory reply.

But it did matter, a great deal. He had

no business there at all. Nobody but Edward had.

Lynne called upon the Masons the following day. He found Miss Marchmont upon the balcony, under a dim, purple shadow of vines, her black hair all tucked away behind her ears, and with her wicked eyes, alternately watching Edward Marchmont, guarding her on one side, and the younger Mason on the other, — a pale, astonished looking youth, who merely made eyes at the stately beauty and left all the conversation to his rival.

Lynne appeared, brilliant, handsome, entertaining. Miss Marchmont looked around for a seat for him. There was a stool under the vines, — he drew it to her feet.

"Your guardian has brought me to dine," maliciously; "do I interrupt you?"

"No," said Margaret, "we have nothing to interrupt."

Edward's brow lowered, — he had been reading to her. Young Mason surveyed Lynne as if he had been a gorilla.

Nevertheless, Lynne maintained his ground bravely, and Miss Marchmont's quiet little smiles and sadly aggravating glances rewarded him well. Her eyes were too bright not to see the toils around her. He dined with them, making himself the life of the table. Edward sulked like a school-boy; but Mason was a jolly host, and Miss Marchmont looked a divinity. They were going to visit a monastery across the lake, — would Lynne go with them? Miss Marchmont came out, looking like a Spanish beauty, with her mantilla fastened in the Andalusian style, and the plain black fan hanging by a silver cord to her marble wrist.

"This is all you need," said Edward, dropping a half-blown, musky rose down on her black tresses. Lynne picked it up.

"The lily is lovelier than the rose," he said.

It dropped over the balcony, like a crimson star. Something went with it, white, filmy, fluttering, — a little lace handkerchief, on a sudden breeze. Lynne laid his hand carelessly on the vines.

"No," said Miss Marchmont, "I forbid it! It can be recovered as we go down."

For answer, Lynne flung himself over. It was a dizzy height, half concealed in a tangle of vines.

"He'll be dashed to atoms," said Edward carelessly.

Miss Marchmont paled to the lips.

"O George," to the younger Mason, "call him back, — keep him!" piteously.

"Come back!" roared young Mason, over the balcony.

Lynne had disappeared. There was no trace left of his descent. They stood like statues.

"Let us go down to the boat," said Edward; "the others are waiting, — he will join us."

Miss Marchmont walked very slowly, — and finally stopped.

"Some one must go back!" imperatively, "he must be injured."

"Margaret!"

She made a repellant gesture.

"Wait."

Something that might have been a bird, but was only the tiny handkerchief fluttered into her hand. Lynne looked down from a rock above them, with a pale, smiling face. There was a blood-stain on the handkerchief.

Edward helped Miss Marchmont into the boat, and Lynne unfurled the sail, but slowly.

"Are you hurt?" he heard her soft voice say.

"No, — it is nothing," cheerfully.

"Shall I thank you for such a foolish venture?"

"I have my reward already."

They shot out across the lake, as if winged. Miss Marchmont had no more to say to Lynne. Edward monopolized her. Lynne was left to escort a Miss Mason.

It was moonlight when they returned from the monastery. The lake lay sleeping with its guard of misty mountains, like a great pearl in the white fire of the Southern moon. An echo of voices came softly from the latticed windows and distant terraces, and a boatman on the shore sang, —

"Ave santissima!

We lift our souls to thee

Ora pro nobis!

'Tis nightfall on the sea."

The pure face beside Edward looked dreamily down the lake.

"And yonder is Italy?"

"My Italy is here!" was Marchmont's impassioned answer, as he looked into her eyes.

Lynne shrugged his shoulders, smiling,

as they went off up the shore with the Masons, each and all waving him a gay good-night.

"Alnaschar again," he said.

The days went by, one by one,—rare, golden-hearted, Southern days. Never did sunshine steep such purple into the full grape, never did flowers blow, or low winds rustle, as in those enchanted days! Lynne came and went as he pleased at the Masons; it was the last of their stay; they were talking now of Rome and Florence. The *Mis ses* Mason were charmed with Mr. Raleigh,—so talented, so young, so *distinguel*! Of course he had an object in view in calling there so much. There were three of them,—which could it be?"

One evening Lynne found the pleasant, sumptuous rooms quite deserted; the party were outside somewhere among the mulberry-trees. He paused for a moment on the balcony, half hidden in green leaves, gazing at a soft, red star above the mountains. Oh the slumbrous sweetness of that Southern night!

A footstep, light as air, tinkled past,—a faint perfume from gauzy drapery, and dark curls, threaded as if by silver arrows by the moonlight, and Margaret passed him like a dream. Her dress brushed against him, full of that faint perfume; he might have touched her. She glided, queenly and white, into the room beyond. Presently he heard the tinkle of a guitar; she was playing a wild mountain song of Tyrol. Lynne leaned back, hushed, breathless, just seeing her faintly in the shadows.

Suddenly the song ceased. A man's voice coming from the same room shattered the silence with its sharp, passionate pleading.

The blood rushed hot through Raleigh's veins. To turn away was to intrude upon them, and it was so much the work of a moment that he had no time to weigh the matter.

"It can never be," said the calm, sad voice of Margaret Marchmont. "Take the heritage, if you will,—I care for it only as the gift of the only mother I ever knew; but my hand—never speak of this again to me."

"But I love you!" cried Edward pas-

sionately. "It was her wish; she would have given you to me years ago."

Miss Marchmont rose up.

"I know the story. You would have spurned the gift then; and if you had not, I could never have married you. Edward, this is worse than useless. Rise up,—let us part friends."

A moment later, and Lynne heard the door close violently. She was pacing slowly adown the room, when he dared turn and look, her white hands clinging together, and an indescribable sadness in her air.

Suddenly his heart stopped its beating,—she had stepped out on the balcony. He knew he was discovered; his tall figure was the first thing her eyes rested upon,—those falcon eyes, slowly dilating with indignant scorn! He stepped out of the shadow, and confronted her.

"Pardon me! I could not escape. It was nothing of my own seeking, Margaret."

She flushed,—the dark eyes drooped. He stood up before her in the moonlight.

"Margaret, do you remember the station where you came for me that night? That was where I first loved you. Had I no right to know whether another was to take my treasure from my grasp?"

She put her white hands before her face, with something that was like a cry.

"I put my heart down here, at last," said Lynne, manly and fervent. "The memory of the child Madge has been with me always; but to you, the beautiful woman, I make my offering. Do with it as you will,—you are the only love of my life."

She uncovered her face, then,—that radiant face, flushed, tremulous, tearful.

"O Lynne, Lynne! and I have loved you so long, too!"

She was in his arms, on his heart, the heart that loved her with a strong man's passionate love. Many things were made clear to their eyes in that moment, under those arches of purpled vine, with the moonlight streaming down over Lago Maggiore!

They were married at Rome,—a quiet little wedding, where Edward was expected, but did not appear; and where Mason, senior, though sorely disappointed, gave the bride away. The heritage of Marchmont was no longer to be contended for,—it had found its master at last.